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NEO-HINDUISM AND MILITANT POLITICS

IN BENGAL, 1875-1910

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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Preface

This dissertation explores a period of ideological innovation and political ferment which was crucial to the development of nationalism in Bengal. The formulation of a Neo-Hindu religious ideology and the adaptation of religious symbols to new meanings is investigated in the context of political pressures and patterns of social stratification in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal. It is hoped that this attempt to integrate the study of ideological transformation and social change will contribute to the understanding of the problems of national development in modern Bengal.

Biographical and autobiographical works, essays and fiction, and periodical literature of the period, in both English and Bengali, were the primary sources for study of change in religious ideology and the use of religious symbols. British government reports have been used in combination with Bengali periodical literature to investigate social stratification and political development. Transliteration of Bengali words is based on the system used in Rachel Van Meter Baumer's Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the Bengali Renaissance (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1964). Sanskrit spellings have been used for words such as Vaiśya or Vedānta which are more easily recognized by scholars of all regions of India in their Sanskrit

form. Indian place names, such as Calcutta or Dacca, are given in their most common form in Indian English, and are not underlined. Indian personal names are spelled according to the form used by the individual himself in Roman script. Translations from Bengali were done by the author unless otherwise indicated.

NEO-HINDUISM AND MILITANT POLITICS

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By Barbara Southard

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Division of the

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ABSTRACT

The participants in Hindu religious reform groups of late nineteenth century Bengal were members of the Bengali elite, an English-educated, professional and urban group drawn from the three Hindu upper castes who dominated the land. The Hindu upper castes and the English-educated elite were generally Śaktas, followers of the Mother Goddess Kālī and the advaita Vedānta philosophy, although there was a Vaiṣṇava minority among them. The masses were generally Muslim or Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult.

Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava religious reformers incorporated into their religious ideology concepts of human progress, social activism and individual ethical judgment which were not stressed in established Śakta-Vedānta and Vaiṣṇava faiths. They attempted to redirect the ethical commitment of Hindus from a particularistic code of duties, centered around family and caste obliga-

tions, to a broader concept of social activism in the service of the national community. Neo-Hindu leaders attempted to demonstrate that doctrines of human progress and social activism were compatible with Hinduism and that modernization could be achieved within the framework of Hindu thought. They urged independent efforts for self-development rather than imitation of the West and dependence on the British.

In the late nineteenth century when the Bengali elite was growing in numbers and consolidating as a professional elite with pretensions to political power, British administrators demonstrated increased racial arrogance and distrust of educated elites in India. Neo-Hindu ideology responded to a growing sentiment of opposition to British rule among segments of the Bengali elite who doubted that the British intended to grant them increased political participation. The Neo-Hindu formulation of an ideology of modernization along indigenous lines provided the elite with a reasoned justification to view themselves as an indigenous group capable of political leadership without British guidance.

Neo-Hindu ideology spread rapidly among the Bengali elite between 1899 and 1905 when Lord Curzon's administration threatened to restrict their influence in political and educational institutions. During the agitation against the partition of Bengal province in 1905, politicians of the Bengali elite used the Neo-Hindu ideology of an indigenous

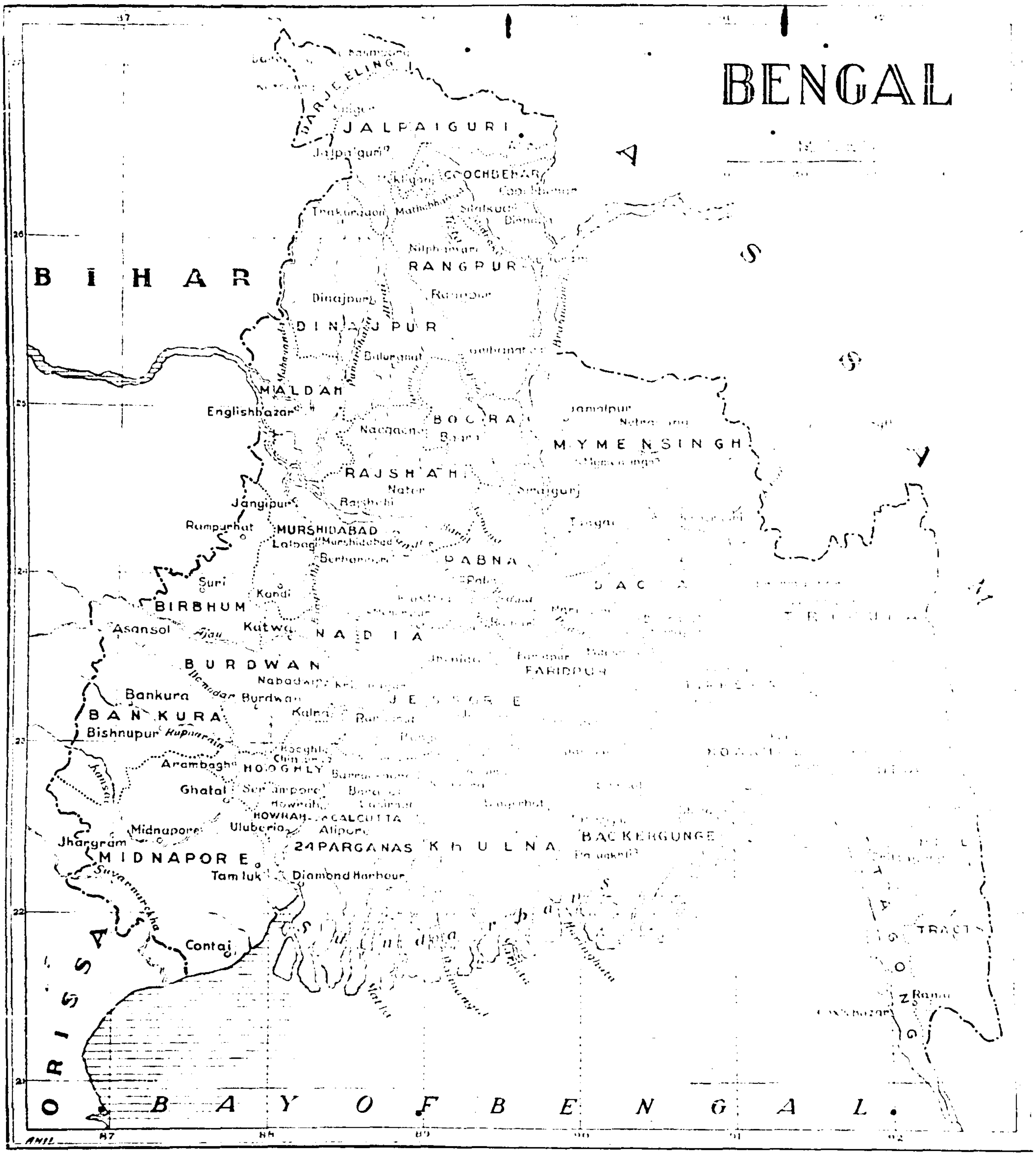
form of modernization to justify their demand for independence and militant tactics of confrontation with British rule. They emphasized a political Vedānta ideology which elaborated the Neo-Vedānta concept that God is the sum total of all human souls, into a theory that God is also incarnated in national communities. The incarnation of God in the nation was identified with the Śakta Goddess Kālī.

The Śakta-Vedānta religious idiom was utilized by militant politicians to appeal for a wider base of support including the predominantly Śakta rural upper castes as well as the Bengali elite in urban areas. The failure of militant politicians to refer to Muslim or Vaiṣṇava religious symbols was combined with lack of attention to secular issues of land and tax reform which would have appealed to the lower caste Hindu and Muslim cultivators. Participants in the economic boycott against British goods and the terrorist movement were students and professionals, and members of landed upper caste families. Resentment against the boycott and its upper caste supporters among lower caste Hindus and Muslims resulted in counter-mobilization and communal riots. The political Vedānta idiom provided the Bengali elite with a rationale to oppose British rule, and had the additional advantage of providing a link between the urban elite and the rural upper castes, but made communication with other groups in Bengali society difficult. During the anti-partition agitation a pattern of

division along religious lines was established which fragmented the nationalist movement in Bengal.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In the late nineteenth century a Hindu, English-educated, professional elite became politically influential in Bengali society. If the concept of elite is defined as the influential, there may be more than one elite in a given society, an elite of power (political elite), as well as elites of wealth, respect, knowledge, etc.[1] Often a single group is influential in terms of multiple values of power, wealth, and knowledge, but the structure of Bengal society in the late nineteenth century included two discernible elites. The British administrators were the political elite although they shared some degree of power with English-educated Bengalis in the civil service and legislative councils. The British were also the top echelon of the elite of wealth because they dominated large scale industry, overseas trade and banking, while local trade was in the hands of Bengali commercial castes and the Marwaris, a North Indian commercial caste. The English-educated, professional and urban Bangali group was an elite in terms of social prestige, cultural influence and indigenous political leadership. Whereas the British who possessed dominant political and economic powers

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[1] Harold Lasswell, "Introduction: The Study of Political Elites," Harold Lasswell and Daniel Lerner, eds., World Revolutionary Elites (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1965), pp. 4, 9-11.

were outsiders, the Hindu, English-educated, professional group may be termed the indigenous "Bengali elite."

The late nineteenth century was a time of political change and development for the Bengali elite culminating in the anti-partition agitation of 1905, when the Bengali elite for the first time became deeply involved in militant political activity aimed at the overthrow of British rule. The quarter of a century prior to the anti-partition agitation witnessed the emergence of new trends among the Bengali elite. It was a period of rapid growth of political organizations. Increased interest in politics coincided with the growth of an intense preoccupation with religious issues among groups in the Bengali elite. The issue of religious reform had first been raised in 1828 when the Brāhma Sābhā was established for the purification of the Hindu religion. Until 1880 Brāhma[2] groups were almost alone in their attempt to reinterpret Hinduism. Then in the eighties and nineties interest in Hindu religious reinterpretation reached its peak with a variety of Neo-Hindu reformist groups attempting to reinterpret the Hindu heritage.

This dissertation proposes to investigate the ideological transition that occurred between 1880 and 1905 whereby segments of the Bengali elite came to advocate a militant

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[2]The term "Brāhma" refers to members of the religious reform organization the Brāhma Sābhā, its successor the Brāhma Samāj, and its branches.

political ideology which demanded independent and dominant leadership of their society rather than a dependent partnership with the British. The new militant political ideology challenged the British administration and the moderates among the Bengali elite who believed in cooperation with the British. During most of the period political associations of Bengal were still dominated by those who advocated a moderate political ideology. The "moderates" had trust in the ultimate intention of the British to grant self-rule in India, and their tactics were aimed at persuading the British administration to grant reforms and greater representation for Indians in government. The Bengali elite of the late nineteenth century was closely tied to educational and professional opportunities available under British rule, and they naturally felt to some degree dependent on its continuance. The moderates in the Bengali elite depended on the good will of the British government for reform, and they aspired to continue the partnership in which they could cooperate with the British. The militant political position, on the other hand, rejected the idea of partnership and aimed at the overthrow of British rule. It stressed more vigorous tactics based on the assumption that the government would make concessions to Indian aspirations only under duress.[3] The roots

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[3]Richard Park, The Rise of Militant Nationalism in Bengal: a regional study of Indian nationalism (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1950), p. 2.

of a militant political ideology may more readily be found outside the structure of indigenous political organizations, the Indian Association, and the Bengal unit of the Indian National Congress.[4] During this period new groups had formed around the issue of Hindu religious reinterpretation. In this dissertation the transformation in the ideological outlook of the Bengali elite will be studied in the context of their involvement in Hindu religious reform groups.

New ideological trends among the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century have recently been analyzed as basically conservative by several scholars. Pradip Sinha in Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History[5] uses the term "gentry" to describe the Bengali elite of the late nineteenth century. According to Sinha the elite generally comprised upper caste men with property and an interest in English education and the professions. The withdrawal of the Bengali elite from commercial enterprise by 1850 determined their character as a landed middle class or gentry, and Sinha stresses the influence of rural ties on the formation of elite culture. Urbanized and English-educated men of the upper castes retained ties to their villages, and

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[4]The Indian National Congress, a political organization attended by delegates from all over India once a year, was first organized in 1885.

[5]Pradip Sinha, Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965).

these rural ties acted as a check on liberal ideas introduced by western education which might otherwise have seriously challenged traditional Hindu values. According to Sinha, the Bengali elite in the latter nineteenth century assimilated some western ideas in a compromise which retained their basic Hindu tradition intact. In fact, Sinha characterized late nineteenth century Bengali society as "Victorian" meaning that the elite was basically concerned with stability.[6] He regards the Neo-Hindu movements which arose in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as part of this compromise with tradition. He analyzes the Neo-Vaiṣṇava and the Neo-Vedānta movements as an attempt to provide continuity with Hindu tradition and stability for the elite.

Although J. H. Broomfield's terminology is different, his view of the development of the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century is essentially similar to that of Pradip Sinha. In his book Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal,[7] Broomfield prefers the indigenous term "bhadralok" (respectable person) to describe the Bengali

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[6] "Such a society may be said to approximate in certain important matters to the concept of Victorianism, so far as it is understood to signify the prominence of the middle class with its newly acquired sense of solidarity and its innate desire to reconcile new ideas with the basic needs of stability." See ibid., p. 91.

[7] J. H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968).

elite. According to Broomfield the "bhadralok" was a status group consisting mainly of Hindus of the three upper castes. They were distinguished by their position as receivers of land rents, their enthusiasm for English education and professional employment, and their sense of social superiority. Broomfield suggests that the "bhadralok" cannot be identified as a class or an occupational group.[8] There were both wealthy and poor "bhadralok," and there was no dividing line between landholders and the professional middle class according to Broomfield. He emphasises the rural ties of the elite although he does not use the term "gentry." He regards the growth of Neo-Hindu religious ideology and militant political opposition to British rule as a conservative tendency leading to a "closed" rather than an "open" elite. The Neo-Hindu movements were essentially revivalist and created a mythical interpretation of classical Indian culture which justified continued dominance of the upper caste elite. Neo-Hinduism and militant politics tended to undermine acceptance of English institutions which were helping to further open recruitment to the

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[8]The term "bhadralok" is not used in this study because popular usage of the word in Bengali does not correspond exactly to Broomfield's definition. Moreover, in this study the Bengali elite is defined in terms of occupation and education, rather than in terms of "life style," the criterion used by Broomfield in defining the "bhadralok" as a status group. Broomfield's "bhadralok" approximately corresponds to the upper caste group in Bengali society, while the Bengali elite according to our definition is only a segment of upper caste society, an urbanized, English-educated, professional group. See Chapter 2 for further discussion.

elite in his view.

K. Mukherji has also suggested that there was a conservative trend in the development of the Bengali elite in his article "The Renaissance in Bengal and Maharashtrian Thought from 1850 to 1920."[9] According to Mukherji, the Bengali elite exhibited a "progressive" tendency in the early nineteenth century, but after 1880 there was a retreat to "traditionalism." The old Muslim and Hindu aristocracy had been undermined by British administration in the late eighteenth century which led to "progressive" trends in the early nineteenth. The turnover in land ownership, and new opportunities in commerce and the professions created a new elite open to new ideas. New forces of individualism, rationalism and secularism created an atmosphere of "renaissance" in Bengal in which the old caste society was challenged by members of the Brāhma Samāj and the Derozians[10] prior to 1880. According to Mukherji, the elite had reached the critical size which could be supported by the economic conditions of the times by 1880. Mukherji suggested that the economic development of the elite

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[9] K. Mukherji, "The Renaissance in Bengal and Maharashtrian Thought," Artha Vijnana, Vol. IV, No. 4 (December 1962), pp. 331-342.

[10] The Derozians were a very small group of young Bengali Hindus, many of whom had been students of Derozio at the Hindu College, who shocked Hindu society in the late twenties and thirties of the last century. They attacked the precepts and practices of Hinduism, flouted orthodox caste rules regarding diet, and called for freedom of thought. They caused a sensation but they remained a small and isolated group. See Pradip Sinha, op. cit., pp. 94-97.

was checked after 1880 which led to the decline of liberal, rational, and individualistic thought. The Neo-Hinduism of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Vivekananda in the eighties and nineties represented a retreat from liberal secular thought to mystic revivalism. The ideologies of militant political opposition to British rule associated with Neo-Hinduism were also a retreat from the liberal and secular political ideology of the moderates in his view.

Mukherji's analysis of the character of the Bengali elite is essentially similar to that of Sinha and Broomfield. They all perceive conservative trends in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Sinha and Broomfield emphasize the role of rural ties maintained by the elite and Mukherji the role of restricted economic opportunities in producing a conservative trend. However, the basic assumptions of these three views of the development of the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century are challenged by Anil Seal's delineation of social stratification in Bengal in The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth Century.[11] Anil Seal's study of the "political arithmetic" of Bengal presidency is largely based on government statistics. He points out that the late nineteenth century was a period of rapid growth in numbers of

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[11]Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

persons with English education and professional occupations. Professionals and civil servants were largely drawn from the upper castes but they were increasingly cut off from their dependence on agriculture and land rent. Anil Seal has shown that the political associations of the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Bengal were almost entirely dominated by the new professionals with insignificant representation of upper caste landed interests. Seal indicates that there was a smaller professional urbanized group emerging as a vocal and organized group distinct from upper caste rural society, which raises doubts about the Broomfield and Sinha theory of a strong rural pull. Sinha and Broomfield's view of the growth of Neo-Hindu religious ideologies as a reflection of close rural ties can also be questioned since it rests on the assumption of a strong rural pull on the professional elite which is doubtful in the late nineteenth century. It is also questionable whether K. Mukherji's picture of the Bengali elite as a stagnating group due to the limitations of economic development is wholly accurate. The number of English-educated professionals was increasing more rapidly at the end of the nineteenth century in Bengal than in any previous period. The new elite was certainly experiencing frustration due to lack of economic opportunities, but it seems unwarranted to assume that this frustration led to conservatism when the actual numbers exposed to western ideas and institutions was increasing rapidly.

Pradip Sinha and K. Mukherji assume that since the Neo-Hindu movements of the late nineteenth century had revivalist elements their impact was conservative. An interesting work on the earlier part of the century by David Kopf challenges this view of the function of Hindu revival for the Bengali elite. Kopf's British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance[12] suggests that British Orientalist scholars created a revivalist concept of a Hindu "golden age" which helped to stimulate reform movements among the Bengali elite in the early nineteenth century. The British Orientalists constructed an idyllic picture of the Hindu past which was used by English educated Hindus to question existing customs and provide a model for the future. He points out that movements which are apparently revivalist may represent a reform effort to put new ideas in a familiar cultural context. Kopf analyzed the Hindu "golden age" concept in terms of its function for the Hindu group who espoused it. His work suggests that the Neo-Hindu religious ideologies should also be more carefully examined in the context of their function for the group participating in them.

Broomfield suggests that the function of Neo-Hindu ideology, with its idealization of the Hindu past, was the preservation of upper caste claims to dominance. The period

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[12]David Kopf, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

from 1912 to 1927, which Broomfield studied, was a time when the Bengali upper castes were being challenged by "non-bhadralok" groups for political power. At this juncture the tendency of the upper castes to cling to a Neo-Hindu ideology which had little relevance for the Muslim and Vaiṣṇava masses may have reflected an exclusive tendency due to fear of competition. But in the late nineteenth century the dominance of the upper castes in professional and cultural associations had not been challenged. Their dominance of indigenous political associations was not challenged until the formation of the Muslim League in 1906. According to Broomfield Neo-Hindu doctrines undermined elite faith in English representative institutions due to "bhadralok" fear of competition. But in the late nineteenth century there was no articulate competition and the dilemna of an open or a closed elite was not as yet an issue. The function Neo-Hindu ideology served for the elite when it was formulated in the eighties and nineties and its effect on the outlook of the elite through the first decade of the twentieth century still requires investigation.

A nationalist school of Bengali scholarship represented by the recent work of Haridas and Uma Mukherjee and B. B. Majumdar[13] has presented the theory of the rise of spiritual

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[13]B. B. Majumdar, Militant Nationalism in India and its Socio-Religious Background (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, 1966); Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom or The Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958).

nationalism in the anti-partition agitation of 1905. According to these authors the Neo-Hindu movements of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Vivekananda were part of a progressive nationalist movement, and were the basis for the creation of nationalist feeling in Bengal. Broomfield's work, on the other hand, suggests that the impact of Neo-Hindu religious movements on political ideology and mobilization is quite complex. Broomfield has stressed the plural nature of Bengali society and the necessity of considering religious, economic and caste stratifications in analyzing politics and nationalism. According to Broomfield the effect of active militant opposition to British rule and the use of a Neo-Hindu religious idiom during the anti-partition movement was to accentuate tensions between different groups in Bengali society since the new ideology did not appeal to Muslims and lower caste Hindus. Thus, the Neo-Hindu religious movements cannot be linked with the growth of a nationalism with a broad base in the various strata of Bengali society. Broomfield's criticism of the spiritual nationalism theory points to the need for clarification of the use of the term nationalism. Two common usages of the term nationalism are:
(1) to denote group consciousness of attachment to a national entity, and (2) to denote ideologies seeking to justify the concept of a nation-state.[14] Nationalism as an ideology can

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[14] A Dictionary of the Social Sciences (New York: The Free Press, 1964, 1967), p. 455.

be propounded by small groups in a society, while nationalism conceived as group consciousness suggests mobilization of wider participation. The scholars mentioned above who advanced the theory of spiritual nationalism have jumped from demonstrations of nationalist ideological content in Neo-Hindu ideologies to the assumption of large scale nationalist mobilization. According to Broomfield the militant nationalist ideology incorporating Neo-Hindu symbols which was formulated by the leaders of the anti-partition movement appealed to a single status group, the "bhadralok." He thus views it as a self-contained ideology produced within a single group appealing only to itself. He does not recognize any split between urban and rural upper caste society so he does not investigate the problem of which segments of the "bhadralok" formulated the ideology and which segments responded to it. His analysis of the effect of the use of a Neo-Hindu idiom on political mobilization is limited by his consideration of the "bhadralok" as an undifferentiated group.

The present study focuses on a two part hypothesis concerning Neo-Hindu religious ideologies[15] and the political

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[15] Neo-Hindu interpretations are called religious ideologies on the premise that they interpreted basic Hindu beliefs as compatible with social and political action, in accordance with David Apter's definition of ideology as the systematic presentation of fundamental beliefs to provide a framework for social action. See David Apter, "Ideology and Discontent," David Apter, ed., Ideology and Discontent (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 16-17.

development of the Bengali elite, the relation of Neo-Hinduism to their political thought and their attempts at political mobilization. The first part of our hypothesis is concerned with the relationship between the emergence of Neo-Hindu religious ideology and political militancy among the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century, and the second part deals with the consequences of utilization of Neo-Hindu concepts and symbols by the Bengali elite in the early twentieth century in actual political action aimed at mobilization of support for overthrow of British rule.

Hypothesis

Neo-Hindu ideology of modernization consonant with indigenous thought provided a rationale for groups among the Bengali elite to articulate a militant political position challenging British rule and asserting their own claim to independent political leadership, but the limited appeal of Neo-Hindu concepts and symbols impeded political mobilization outside of the upper caste group in Bengali society.

a. Neo-Hindu religious doctrines, formulated by members of the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century, integrated new ethical concepts of individual ethical judgment, social activism, and human progress into their Hindu heritage. This reinterpretation of Hinduism developed an ideology of modernization consonant with indigenous thought which provided the elite with a reasoned

justification to view themselves as an indigenous group capable of political leadership without British guidance.

b. In the first decade of the twentieth century the Neo-Hindu interpretation of the meaning of Hindu concepts and symbols was utilized by militant politicians of the Bengali elite to mobilize urban and rural upper caste support for the anti-partition movement. At the same time emphasis on Śakta symbols appealing to the upper castes and exclusion of the symbols of Islam or the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult of the Bengali masses, in propaganda of militant political leaders, impeded the growth of a unified nationalist opposition to British rule.

To establish the first part of our hypothesis it must be demonstrated that participants in the Neo-Hindu movements of the late nineteenth century were drawn from the Bengali elite, a segment of which was alienated from British rule while remaining attached to western ideas and institutions. Chapter Two will attempt to demonstrate that after 1870 a separate elite identity had emerged among English-educated men of the three upper castes. This social and cultural elite became contenders for political power in the late nineteenth century but their political aspirations for a greater share in the government of India were frustrated. Succeeding chapters on the Neo-Hindu movements of the late nineteenth

century will attempt to show that these religious movements expressed the concerns of this English-educated elite which had been exposed and attracted to western ideas and institutions. Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava religious ideologies formulated by the elite adopted western concepts to Hindu idioms and Hindu symbols. Neo-Hindu movements asserted the value of Hindu tradition and at the same time performed the function of assimilating western ideas attractive to the elite into their Hindu heritage. Neo-Hinduism thus provided the elite with an ideology incorporating the values of progress and social activism without obvious dependence on western thought. This activist interpretation of Hindu concepts and institutions by Neo-Hindu groups provided a rationale for their conviction that Hindu values were capable of generating progress without dependence on British influence. The Neo-Hindu concept of an indigenous model for modernization facilitated the militant political demand for overthrow of British rule and substitution of the leadership of the Bengali elite.

This hypothesis challenges Broomfield and Sinha's conception of the "bhadralok" or upper castes as a unified group, and the Sinha-Mukherji view that Neo-Hindu movements of the late nineteenth century were a retreat from contact with western ideas due to the rural ties of the upper castes. According to our hypothesis Neo-Hindu movements were led by a professional urban elite without rural ties, who greatly

admired western ideas and institutions. Their formulation of Neo-Hindu ideology aimed at the rejection of western rule rather than rejection of western ideas. Western ideas were assimilated into their Hindu heritage to facilitate challenge of British rule. According to our hypothesis Neo-Hinduism was a response to competition of the elite with the British for leadership, rather than an expression of fear of competition from other groups in Bengali society as suggested by Broomfield. At the time when Neo-Hinduism was formulated in the late nineteenth century Muslims and lower caste Hindus were not as yet politically active, and the elite viewed politics in terms of their relationship to the British.

The second part of our hypothesis deals with the Bengali elite in the early twentieth century, when their belief that the actions of the British government implied restriction of their political power and elite status impelled them to attempt to broaden their political base in order to effectively challenge British rule. Our hypothesis that the use of a Neo-Hindu religious idiom impeded political mobilization outside the upper castes, rests on the premise that social and religious stratifications were closely correlated in Bengali society. First, it must be demonstrated that the Śakta-Vedānta religious orientation was dominant among the upper castes, while the rest of Bengali society was mainly Muslim and Vaiṣṇava. It will be argued that the urbanized professional group were a separate elite which, neverthe-

less, shared the dominant Śakta-Vedānta religious orientation of upper caste society in Bengal. The militant politicians in the anti-partition agitation of 1905 who used a Neo-Hindu religious idiom ignored Neo-Vaiṣṇava formulations and concentrated on Neo-Vedānta concepts and interpretations of Śakta symbols, such as the Kālī symbol for nation, which appealed mainly to the upper castes. However, the Bengali elite were not a self-contained group speaking only to themselves as suggested by Broomfield. The appeal for mobilization made by members of the Bengali elite during the anti-partition movement was directed toward the rural upper castes as well as toward their own urban elite group. At the same time this hypothesis points out that the efforts at political mobilization were limited to the larger upper caste group in this period, which counters the theory of the development of a spiritual nationalism with mass appeal held by Haridas and Uma Mukherjee and B. B. Majumdar. Neo-Hindu religious movements served to reintegrate the Bengali elite with the larger upper caste constituency in Bengali society, and to develop a higher degree of political activism in this group. While the use of a Neo-Hindu religious idiom aided in the mobilization of the upper castes in activities aimed at the overthrow of British rule, it impeded the development of a national mass following for the elite in their opposition to British rule.

To test the first part of our hypothesis that Neo-Hindu religious ideologies provided a rationale for the mili-

tant political position taken by members of the Bengali elite, the composition of Neo-Hindu religious groups will be studied to determine whether memberships were drawn from an identifiable elite group. Then the writings and speeches of Bengali Neo-Hindu leaders will be examined to discover common features, and compared to Śakta and Vaiṣṇava doctrines of established Bengali Hinduism to determine whether new doctrines of social activism and human progress appeared. At the same time the autobiographical and biographical accounts of the lives of Neo-Hindu leaders will be studied to determine their reactions to western culture and their attitudes to British rule. The political ramifications of their picture of Hindu culture and capabilities will be considered, as well as the rationale for political positions taken by Neo-Hindu religious leaders. Neo-Hindu groups and organizations will be studied in the context of their relationship to other groups among the Bengali elite in terms of similarities in ideological outlook and communication channels between them. The ties of Neo-Hindu religious groups with formal political organizations and their role in the formation of informal political groups will also be considered.

The second part of our hypothesis concerning the effect of the utilization of a Neo-Hindu religious idiom on political mobilization will be studied in the context of the 1905 anti-partition movement. The speeches and writings of militant leaders will be studied to determine which groups in

Bengal they attempted to mobilize and what use they wished to make of Neo-Hindu religious idiom. This interpretive study will be balanced by compilation of data on the actual results of mobilization tactics in terms of the social strata of political activists in the passive resistance and terrorist movements against the British and the opponents of their revolutionary cause.

This investigation of the reformulation of Hindu religious ideology by the Bengali elite and the emergence of political militancy in Bengal may also throw some light on more general theoretical problems of the relationship between religion and political development which have been posed in a recent comparative study by Donald Smith of various polities of the "developing" world and the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Catholicism. In discussing the relationship between religious and political ideology one vital problem is to determine the direction of influence. Do political aspirations give rise to the reformulation of religious ideology or does change in religious ideology give rise to political demands? According to Smith's Religion and Political Development a unidirectional causal relationship cannot be established.[16] Our study of ideological developments among the Bengali elite will attempt to determine whether the

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[16]Donald Eugene Smith, Religion and Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), p. 148.

direction of influence between political and religious ideological developments is weighted in this particular historical case. Donald Smith's study also focused on the general question of the relation between religious ideology and the process of politicization. He has suggested that the use of religious symbols and concepts in political movements in transitional societies is due to their capacity to politicize the masses, and he ignored the possibility that religious symbols may have an elitist appeal. The attempt of the present study to determine which groups in Bengali society were interested in religious reformulation and which groups responded to the use of a religious idiom during the anti-partition agitation will provide an interesting case study of the relation between religion and politicization.

The study will cover a time period of approximately thirty-five years from 1875 to 1910. The second chapter deals with the social and religious stratification of Bengali society and the characteristics of the Bengali elite. The next three chapters discuss Neo-Hindu religious movements of the eighties and nineties, the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, the Neo-Vaiṣṇava faith of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Bijoy Krishna Goswami's disciples, and the Neo-Vedānta of Aurobindo and the Jugāntar group, and their attempt to mobilize political support through the use of a Śakta-Vedānta religious idiom. A summary and conclusion is presented in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER II

Social and Religious Stratification of Bengali Society

The region of Bengal is largely a flat and fertile alluvial plain which is now included in northeast India and East Pakistan. From fairly early times this region was a distinct but not homogeneous cultural area within the Indian subcontinent. The Bengali language was a separate vernacular with a developing literature, despite differences in the form of the language spoken in eastern and western Bengal. A unique version of the Hindu social system with an aristocracy of three upper castes, the Brāhmaṇ (priestly caste), Kāyastha (writer caste), and Vaidya (medical caste) developed in Bengal. Bengali religion was characterized by distinctive Hindu cults, the Śakta cult of worship of the Divine Mother, and the Chaitanya cult of Kṛṣṇa worship.[1] In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Bengal was conquered by Muslim invaders, and a large portion of the population was converted to Islam by sūfi missionaries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Bengal came under the sway of the Mughal dynasty in the sixteenth century, and the Mughals retained control to some degree until the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. After the

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[1]For details of the early history of Bengal see R. C. Majumdar, The History of Bengal: The Hindu Period (Dacca: The University of Dacca, 1943).

Mughal dynasty declined various Muslim families struggled for control of the Bengal governorship while acknowledging the overlordship of the Mughal emperor in theory.[2]

British Rule and the Bengali Elite

During the Mughal period the upper strata of Bengali society included Muslims and upper caste Hindus who controlled administrative positions and land. Although Muslim rule had been established in Bengal for many centuries, only a small number of Muslims shared power with the Hindu upper castes. In particular, Hindu dominated the land. For instance, in the reign of Akbar in the sixteenth century, only 20 to 25 of the 582 *zamindārs*[3] were Muslims, the rest were mainly upper caste Hindus.[4]

The initial impact of British rule was to displace Muslim power which had been based on administrative control rather than land or commerce. A second effect was the rise of certain Hindu lower caste commercial groups in the early eighteenth century. After the founding of Calcutta in 1690

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[2]For a detailed history of Bengal in the Muslim period see Jadunath Sarkar, *The History of Bengal: The Muslim Period* (Dacca: University of Dacca, 1948).

[3]Officials in charge of collecting land revenue, part of which they retained for their own use, in the Mughal era. Under British rule the Permanent Settlement of 1793 gave the *zamindārs* actual ownership of the land.

[4]Jatindra Mohan Datta, "Bānglār Jamidār Kathā" (Story of the Zamindars of Bengal) *Bharatvarsha*, Vol. 31, Pt. 2, No. 6 (1951), p. 429.

the British expanded overseas trade with Bengal and entered the Bengal coastal trade. In the early eighteenth century the British were buying Bengali cloth and other articles to sell in England and Europe. The British depended on Bengali merchants and financiers as intermediaries between themselves and the cloth producers. British activities were a stimulus to trade in this period, and the commercial or Bāniā castes readily became agents and go-betweens for the English East India Company, and acquired large fortunes.[5]

The British had gained major trade concessions in Bengal in 1717,[6] and their share of the internal as well as the external trade of Bengal increased after they won the Battle of Plassey in 1757. They gained economic and eventual administrative control by becoming involved in Bengal politics and supporting one or another contender for the position of governor of Bengal. In 1772 the British assumed direct control over revenue collection and the administration of justice. As the British forced special privileges for their company and private trade, the scope of Bengali commercial

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[5]Benoy Ghose, "Some Old Family Founders in 18th Century Calcutta," Bengal Past and Present, Vol. 79 (January, 1960), pp. 44-54.

[6]Sukumar Bhattarya, The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal (London: Luzac and Co., 1954), pp. 28-32.

groups was restricted.[7] Great Bāniā families declined in the second half of the eighteenth century. Between 1757 and 1785 upper caste Hindus began to enter business and commerce in large numbers. The Hindu upper castes, the Brāhmaṇ, Kāyastha, and Vaidya castes, established a lucrative collaboration with English commerce, finance and administration.[8] From this time until the mid-twentieth century the upper castes were dominant in the composition of the Bengali elite. In 1793, the British Governor-general, Lord Cornwallis, reorganized the collection of revenue. Zamindārs were made owners of the land, and the revenue payment was fixed. At first the fixed annual payments were high but gradually cultivation was extended and the profits of the zamindārs increased. The Permanent Settlement tended to channel the commercial capital of the upper castes back into the land.[9]

Three Stages in the Development of the Upper Castes in Nineteenth Century Bengal

The change in the fortunes of the three upper castes in the nineteenth century can be divided into three stages:

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[7] Tara Chand, "Indian Middle Class: First Period to 1857," History of Freedom Movement in India (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1967), Vol. II, pp. 124-130.

[8] N. K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967), Vol.II, p. 225.

[9] Ibid., pp. 225-226.

(1) From 1800 to 1850 the upper castes had an economic base in land ownership, and many were also enterprising in the fields of commerce and finance. In this period the upper castes began to take advantage of the advent of white collar employment. (2) From 1850 to 1870 the commercial interests of the Bengali upper castes declined and white collar employment increased. (3) From 1870 until the beginning of the twentieth century income from land decreased and the dependence of members of the upper castes on white collar employment increased.

Between 1800 and 1850 trade patterns changed and India became an exporter of raw materials and an importer of finished cloth and other manufactured articles. Foreign merchants gained a higher percentage of profits from trade at the expense of Bengali merchants. Furthermore, Cornwallis' measures to rationalize currency in the late eighteenth century had favored organized British financial institutions rather than the Bengali currency houses who specialized in complex currency manipulation.[10] But commercial difficulties were offset by a rise in profits from land which increased 1300 percent between 1793 and 1872, after which stagnation set in.[11] The general prosperity and enterprise of the Bengali elite in this period is symbolized by the attempt of the

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[10] Tara Chand, _op_. _cit_., pp. 142-149.

[11] Jatindra Mohan Datta, _op_. _cit_., pp. 410-427.

Tagore family to cross the bridge from commercial to industrial capitalism with coal mining enterprises. This was, however, a solitary attempt and by mid-century there were already signs that the Bengalis were retreating from business ventures. There were several factors involved. Speculation in land became increasingly profitable which discouraged the investment of Bengali capital in commerce and industry. Moreover, a series of financial crises and increased British exclusiveness discouraged budding Bengali capitalists. The agency houses, which had financed indigo and other business ventures with a combination of Indian and European capital, failed in 1830, and Tagore's Union Bank failed in 1847. These financial institutions were replaced by trading firms based in England which channeled British capital directly into Indian ventures.[12]

While the Bengali upper castes were gradually losing their commercial foothold, new opportunities arose in the form of white collar employment. In the early nineteenth century Hindu upper castes evinced great enthusiasm for English education. An English school was established as early as 1800 and the Hindu college, which offered an English college education, was founded in 1817 by a group of progressive Indians and Englishmen. After 1835 the official support of

[12]Blair Kling, The Blue Mutiny: Indigo Disturbances in Bengal 1859-1862 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), p. 108.

the British government for western education over Oriental learning provided further stimulus to Bengali upper castes to acquire English education. A government resolution of 1844 openly declared that preference would be given in government appointments to those with a knowledge of English, and English education became a clear avenue of advancement.[13] It was primarily upper caste Hindus who took up English education; the old Muslim aristocracy and the bulk of the Bāniā and other low castes did not take advantage of this new opportunity for social mobility.[14] The period from 1850 to 1870 was a prosperous one for the English-educated. Civil service appointments were available in Bengal, and upper caste Bengalis also dominated the civil service in north India where English education was not so widespread. The professions were also beginning to develop and the English educated entered the fields of law, medicine, and teaching in Bengal and in other provinces which lagged behind in the new education.[15]

After 1870 Bengali upper castes were almost entirely left out of the commercial and industrial development that took place around Calcutta after the opening of the Suez Canal

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[13]Pradip Sinha, Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), pp. 32-37.

[14]Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 59-61.

[15]Rowlatt Sedition Report (Calcutta: 1918), p. 11.

in 1867. Jute manufacturing and overseas trade was dominated by European capital, while local retail and exchange trade was in the hands of Bengali _Bāniā_ castes and the Marwaris, a commercial caste originally from northwest India.[16] As mentioned earlier, the income of the Hindu upper castes from land decreased after 1870. Prior to the Permanent Settlement a severe famine in the seventeen seventies had resulted in abandonment of much cultivable land. After the Permanent Settlement, the extension of cultivation combined with a fixed revenue rate led to a rapid rise of profits from land for most of the eighty years from 1793 to 1872. Since few agricultural improvements were introduced, a rapidly rising population put limits on agricultural prosperity. Yields per acre did not rise and by 1870 fragmentation was cutting the income of landlords and tenants alike. A pattern of agricultural stagnation was set which persists in Bengal until this day. The Hindu upper castes, who were the principal landholders in all areas of Bengal, felt the pinch of decreasing agricultural profits in the later nineteenth century.[17] As a result many of them came to depend on public service and the professions for their livelihood. By 1850 the upper castes had largely withdrawn from commerce, and after 1870 their economic base

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[16] Seal, _op. cit._, p. 50.

[17] Jatindra Mohan Datta, _op. cit._, pp. 401-435.

in land was also threatened. Within the upper castes there was a group emerging in the late nineteenth century which was totally oriented toward the professions and public service.

Brāhmaṇ, Vaidya, and Kāyastha in late nineteenth century Bengal

The three upper castes who were the dominant element in the Bengali elite in the nineteenth century formed thirteen percent of the total Hindu population of Bengal.[18] The *Brāhmaṇ*, or priestly caste, was dominant in the ritual hierarchy. They were also important landholders in Bengal, and they were very successful in acquiring English education and white collar employment in the nineteenth century. The caste generally recognized as second in ritual rank was the *Vaidya* or medical caste. *Vaidya* men wear the sacred thread which signifies upper caste status. They were a small group but in education and wealth they were ahead of the *Brāhmaṇ*. Many abandoned their traditional occupation and distinguished themselves in education, public service and the professions. The third upper caste group in Bengal was the *Kāyastha*, or writer caste, who numbered over a million. Some *Kāyasthas* claimed to be *Kṣatriyas*, but the *Brāhmaṇs* usually dismissed

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[18] They were between five and six percent of the total population of Bengal proper between 1870 and 1900. In 1881 there were 1,076,754 *Brāhmaṇs*, 1,056,093 *Kāyasthas*, and 77,445 *Vaidyas* in Bengal. See Seal, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

them as Śūdras.[19] Nevertheless, they had been recognized as an upper caste in Bengali society for many centuries. During Muslim rule they learned Persian and gained high administrative positions. They also dominated the land under Muslim rule. In the late eighteenth century Kāyasthas as well as Brāhmaṇs moved into the commercial world of Calcutta. In the nineteenth century Kāyasthas also took up English education and more than any other caste they dominated offices in public service.[20] The degree to which these three castes formed a distinctive social group within Bengali society can be determined by comparing levels of education and urbanization and types of occupation among the upper castes and the population as a whole.

In the nineteenth century the upper castes were the most frequent migrants to urban areas. The towns of East Bengal, which were centers of district or subdivisional administration and country trade, were dominated by the upper castes who were attracted by the schools and opportunities in offices, courts, etc.[21] The Hindu upper castes began to

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[19]The theoretical hierarchy of Hindu castes in descending order of status is Brāhmaṇ (priests), Kṣatriya (warriors), Vaiśya (merchants), and Śūdra (laborers). In Bengal there were no proper Vaiśyas because the commercial castes were relegated to Śūdra status. There were no traditional Kṣatriyas although the Kāyasthas claimed Kṣatriya status.

[20]Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya, Hindu Castes and Sects (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1896), pp. 137-300.

[21]Pradip Sinha, op. cit., p. 60.

flock to Calcutta in large numbers at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1901 the upper castes who formed roughly 13 percent of the Hindu population as a whole were 28 percent of the Hindu population of Calcutta.[22] The upper castes were the largest single group of Bengali migrants to Calcutta.[23] Depressed artisan and weaver castes or other low castes showed no tendency to migrate to the metropolis, and the industrial proletariat of Calcutta was largely recruited outside Bengal.[24] While the upper castes were more concentrated in the metropolis and towns of Bengal in the nineteenth century, they retained an important position in rural areas due to their continued dominance of land.[25]

There was a steady growth of college and higher secondary education in Bengal in the late nineteenth century, and the English-educated class increased rapidly. The educational dispatch of Sir Charles Wood in 1854 led to the foundation of the three universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857. The government grant-in-aid system to help private schools and colleges was established in the hopes that it would stimulate primary and mass education. The poverty of the Indian masses, however, prevented them from taking advantage of this oppor-

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[22]Seal, _op_. _cit_., p. 43.

[23]Pradip Sinha, _op_. _cit_., p. 60.

[24]_Ibid_., p. 60.

[25]Seal, _op_. _cit_., p. 55.

tunity. The most striking result of the grant-in-aid system in Bengal was the rapid growth of English higher secondary and college education for the upper castes.[26] In the early eighties the upper castes formed approximately 78 percent of the total college population and 64 percent of the students attending secondary schools.[27] Rates of literacy in the vernacular and in English were significantly higher among the upper castes than in the general population as is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Percentage Distribution of Literacy Among Upper Castes and Total Population in Bengal, 1901

Description	Total Population %	Brahmin %	Vaidya %	Kayastha %
Male Literacy	10.0	63.9	64.8	56.0
Male Literacy in English	0.9	15.7	30.3	14.7

Source: *Census of India, 1901*, as quoted by J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 9-10.

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[26] Romesh Chunder Mitra, "Education," N. K. Sinha, ed., *The History of Bengal, 1757-1905* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1967), pp. 442-443, 448.

[27] Seal, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61 (92.4% of college students were Hindus, and of these 84.7% were *Brāhmaṇs*, *Kāyasthas*, and *Vaidyas*).

Although the rate of literacy among the upper castes was high in comparison with the general population, Table 1 also shows that from 35 to 44 percent of upper caste males were illiterate. English education was practically confined to the upper castes, but the English-educated were only 14 to 30 percent of the upper caste population.

The upper castes were the only group in Bengal in the nineteenth and early twentieth century who showed a significant shift to non-agricultural occupations. A general occupational shift away from agriculture did not take place in Bengal during the period from 1875 to 1905. In fact, any occupational shift that occurred was in favor of agriculture. There are no reliable occupational statistics for the nineteenth century,[28] but the Census figures from 1901 to 1931 indicate several trends in occupational shift which reflect similar economic conditions. The upper castes tended to leave their traditional occupations in favor of modern professions such as law and college teaching. Artisan castes drifted toward agricultural labor or industrial labor. Traditionally agricultural castes maintained their occupations.[29] The extent to which the upper castes dominated new

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[28]The definition of occupational categories differs in each Census for the late nineteenth century which makes it difficult to discover any trends.

[29]Nirmal Kumar Bose, Modern Bengal (Calcutta: Vidyodaya Library, Ltd., 1959), pp. 26-30.

white collar opportunities in government service is shown in Table 2:

Table 2

Distribution of Government Employment Among Upper Castes, Lower Castes, and Muslims, 1901

Description	Appointments in Covenanted and Statutory Civil Service	HIGH GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENT		Percentage of Total Population
		Numbers	Percentage of Total	
Brahman, Vaidya and Kayastha	22	1,104	80.2	5.2
Lower Caste Hindus	0	131	9.5	41.8
Muslims	3	141	10.3	51.2

Source: Census of India, 1901, as quoted by J. H. Broomfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

Table 2 demonstrates that the upper castes obtained about 80 percent of the higher government appointments although they were just over five percent of the total population in 1901. Civil service positions were practically closed as an avenue of new opportunities for other groups. To a similar extent the professions were dominated by the upper castes. For instance, in Dacca Medical College in the year 1875-6, 96 percent of the students were from the upper castes. Of the 244 students only 4 were Muslims and only 6 were lower caste Hindus, while there were 70 Brāhmaṇs, 128 Kāyasthas, and 36

Vaidyas.[30] In the legal profession there was a tendency to raise standards and educational prerequisites which made it more difficult for lower castes and Muslims to enter the profession. In 1873 the Calcutta High Court ruled that in order to qualify as a pleader a student must pass the First Arts examination (taken after two years of college) rather than merely the college entrance examination.[31] Thus, entrance into the professions required an English college education which was almost the exclusive preserve of the upper castes.

Although the upper castes dominated the professions, they were by no means entirely a professional group in the late nineteenth century. There was also a strong rural element in upper caste society earning their livelihood from land rents. Statistics collected for east and north Bengal indicate that one out of five Brāhmaṇs lived on rents while many others were estate managers and rent collectors. One third of the Vaidyas and one seventh of the Kāyasthas lived primarily on rent from their land holdings. Others were managers and rent collectors, and many cultivated their own land, though they were careful to employ lower caste labor for ploughing, which was considered degrading to their social

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[30] General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1875-6 (Calcutta: 1876), p. 78, as quoted by Anil Seal, op. cit., p. 120.

[31] Seal, op. cit., p. 128.

honor as upper caste men.[32]

The English-educated Professional Elite of the Late Nineteenth Century

Since the Hindu upper castes of the late nineteenth century were landlords in rural Bengal, and they also dominated the colleges and professions of urban areas, many recent writers have viewed them as a homogeneous elite. This view of the Bengali elite was apparently first formulated by the British. The Rowlatt Sedition Report of 1918 which examined the causes of revolutionary terrorism in the preceding decade suggested that the terrorists were drawn from an elite group which they called the "bhadralok," a Bengali word meaning gentleman or gentlemen. According to the Rowlatt Report the bhadralok "are mainly Hindus and their leading castes are Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas; but with the spread of English education some other castes too have adopted bhadralok ideals and modes of life. Bhadralok abound in villages as well as in towns, and are thus more interwoven with the landed classes than are the English educated of other provinces."[33]

J. H. Broomfield's definition of the "bhadralok" in his recent work Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth

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[32] See also H. H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal (Calcutta: 1892), Vol. I, pp. 46-50.

[33] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 11.

Century Bengal[34] has many similarities with the Rowlatt definition. According to Broomfield the "bhadralok" were a status group determined by "social honor" or style of life (the Rowlatt report spoke of "mode of life"), rather than in terms of ownership of material goods or occupational skills. Broomfield views the "bhadralok" as a group corresponding roughly to the three upper castes although rare lower caste individuals with English education could gain entrance into this elite group. The "bhadralok" life style was a combination of upper caste custom with the influence of English education to which a portion of the upper castes were exposed. Broomfield does not make any distinction between the mode of life of rural landlords and urban professionals; in his view they were part of the same bhadralok status group.[35]

Broomfield's concept of the "bhadralok" as status group poses several problems. His usage of the term "bhadralok" to designate a particular status group is not the common Bengali usage. The word "bhadralok" was coined in the late nineteenth century to correspond to the English word

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[34]See Broomfield, op. cit., pp. 5-18, for his discussion of the "bhadralok."

[35]Ibid., p. 7. Broomfield comments: "In some parts of India there was a dividing line between landholders and the professional middle class, but there was no such dichotomy in late nineteenth century Bengal. The same bhadralok families who were in receipt of rent supplied sons to Government service and the learned professions."

gentleman and it is commonly used in that general sense. Actually, Broomfield's concept of "bhadralok" seems to be useful only in so far as it isolates the factors which separated the upper caste group from other segments of Bengali society; upper caste dominance of land as well as the professions, English as well as traditional education, and their general social prestige in both village and town. Therefore, it is not clear whether there is any peculiar advantage to be gained by using the word "bhadralok," with its confusing overtones in general Bengali usage, rather than simply referring to upper caste society. Moreover, Broomfield's emphasis on the term "bhadralok" while underlining the difference between the upper castes and the rest of Bengali society, tends to conceal the differences within the upper caste group. According to Broomfield, English education was one of the factors which integrated "bhadralok" culture. But since only 14 to 30 percent of upper caste males were literate in English, and over one third were not literate in any language (see Table 1) it seems equally likely that English education would have been a divisive factor within upper caste society. Broomfield also neglects to explore the possibility of differentiation caused by increasing urbanization and the shift to professional occupations among the upper castes. The umbrella concept of "bhadralok" seems to cut off further investigation into the problem of who were the influential in Bengali society and why. It covers people in too

many diverse social situations, from an illiterate village landlord to a college professor in Calcutta, to provide insight into the composition of the Bengali elite. It would be more fruitful to explore the process of social change and differentiation among the upper castes.

The rapid increase in numbers of English-educated men was one aspect of social change affecting the upper castes in the late nineteenth century that was significant for the formation of the Bengali elite. The period from 1870 to 1900 was characterized by rapid expansion of high school and college enrollment, the increase being primarily high schools and colleges financed by the Bengalis themselves. Non-government English higher-secondary schools increased from 132 in 1870, to 218 in 1880-81, 353 in 1891-92, and 535 in 1901-1902.[36] From these high schools came a rapidly increasing stream of students taking the standardized University of Calcutta entrance examination. The number of students per year sitting for the examination increased almost six times from 1861 to 1900. The figures for selected years are presented in Table 3.

The growth of the number of colleges and in college enrollment was also remarkable in Bengal during the late nineteenth century. In 1870-71 there were 16 arts colleges in Bengal with 1,374 pupils, in 1881-82 there were 21 with

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[36]Romesh Chunder Mitra, *op. cit.*, pp. 442-443, 448.

2,738 pupils, in 1886-87 there were 27 with 3,215 pupils, and in 1891-92 there were 34 arts colleges with 5,225 pupils.[37] In 1901-02 there were 46 English art colleges in Bengal.[38]

Table 3

Increase in College Entrance Examination Candidates from 1861 to 1900

Year	Number of Candidates
1861	1,058
1865	1,350
1872	2,144
1882	3,000
1885	4,317
1888	6,134
1900	6,309

The rapid increase in numbers attending English colleges resulted in stiffer competition for civil service and professional jobs. The number of government positions in particular did not keep pace with the increase in men acquiring English education. The highest civil service positions were reserved for about a thousand members of the covenanted civil service, less than a dozen of whom were Indians in 1887.[39] In the same year there were 623 posts in the uncovenanted

[37] Seal, _op. cit._, p. 19.

[38] Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik, _A History of Education in India_ (Bombay: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1951), p. 285.

[39] Seal, _op. cit._, pp. 116-118.

civil service in Bengal; Bengali Hindus occupied 522 of these positions. In the lower ranks of government service there were 3,807 posts in Bengal paying Rs. 75 or more per month. However, even these lower posts were not entirely open to the Bengali elite; 35 percent of these positions were given to Europeans and Eurasians.[40] Thus, the number of positions in government service in Bengal which the elite had a chance to occupy was roughly 3,000 and perhaps a few hundred Bengalis were employed in other provinces. Considering that the size of the educated elite was at least 30,000 by 1887 (see page 47 below), and that government service was a principal avenue of employment for the elite, competition for jobs was bound to be keen. However, due to the decline of agricultural profits and the retreat of the Bengali elite from commerce, English education was still very attractive to the upper castes.[41]

The statistics on the employment of college graduates indicate they almost all entered government service or the professions. In 1882 the Hindu Patriot, an English language newspaper, sent out a questionnaire to ascertain the occupation of Calcutta University graduates. The results are compiled in Table 4 on the following page.

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[40] Ibid., p. 362.

[41] Pradip Sinha, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

Table 4

Employment of Calcutta Graduates,
1858-1881

Occupation	Number	Percentage %
Government Service	525	
Service in the native states	19	
Total in Government and native state service	544	32
Law	613	36
Education, medicine, journalism	170	10
Miscellaneous [zamindars (5), planters (2), merchants (1), in England (5), others (5)]	18	1
Dead	33	2
Not returned	334	19
Total	1,712	100%

Source: Hindu Patriot (October 23, 1882), as quoted by Anil Seal, *op. cit.*, appendix 2, Table 51, p. 358.

Not only did those with college education tend to go into government service and the professions, the sons of civil servants and professionals were the majority of college students. Although there was a network of rural schools teaching English in Bengal, and many rural landlords were anxious for their sons to attend these schools, the higher the level of education, the less likely a son of a rural landlord would be able to successfully compete with sons of professionals and civil servants in the late nineteenth century. According to the government education report for 1870-71 the largest number of college students were sons of

professionals, the second largest group were government Servants, followed by the sons of rent receivers.[42] In 1883-84 more than half the students at college and in the high schools had fathers employed by the government or in private service and the professions, and only about a fifth came from families dependent on rents. The sons of rent receivers were less numerous in colleges than in high schools.[43] In the late nineteenth century the English-educated professional group tended to become self-perpetuating.

The English-educated professional was also much less likely to have connection with the land in the late nineteenth century than in earlier periods. Pradip Sinha, in his recent work Nineteenth Century Bengal; Aspects of Social History, has pictured landowners and professionals as belonging to a single elite group, the "gentry," a term he uses almost synonymously with Broomfield's "bhadralok."[44] According to Sinha, the

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[42] General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of Bengal for 1870-1871 (Calcutta: 1871), pp. 60-81, as quoted by Anil Seal, op. cit., p. 62.

[43] General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1883-1884 (Calcutta: 1884), pp. 10-11, as quoted by Anil Seal, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

[44] According to Sinha: "The Bengali gentry or 'bhadralok' belonged generally to the three higher castes. They could have been landlords--superior zamindars, or petty 'talukdars' but never actual cultivators--professional men like pleaders, 'mukteers,' doctors or priests, and people in private and public employ like clerks and 'muhuris.' Their economic condition varied from affluence to indigence." Pradip Sinha, op. cit., p. 40.

English-educated professionals maintained close ties with the land.[45] This may be true of the earlier part of the nineteenth century, but in the late nineteenth century government servants and professionals living in urban areas rarely maintained any connection with the land. According to the Census of 1891 only about 7 percent of government officers and clerks, 10 percent of lawyers, 10 percent of teachers, and less than one percent of literary men had a connection with the land.[46]

Urban residence was characteristic of the English-educated professionals in Bengal who were clustered in Calcutta and the towns of Bengal. A large number of colleges were located in Calcutta. In 1883 out of a total of 3,756 college students in Bengal, 2,445 attended colleges in Calcutta. The metropolitan area and surrounding districts contained over half of the English-educated Indians in Bengal.[47] According to the Census of 1891, thirteen percent of the male population in Calcutta were literate in English, while from three to less than one percent were literate in English in the rest of Bengal.[48] Outside of Calcutta, the English-educated clustered in the districts surrounding the metropolis and the towns of east Bengal. After 1880 many

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[46] Seal, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[48] *Census of India: Bengal 1901*, Vol. VI, Pt. I, p.308.

graduates were driven out of Calcutta to smaller towns by the dearth of employment in the metropolis.[49]

The rapid increase in English-educated college graduates in the late nineteenth century created a nucleus for the formation of a professional elite. English education, professional occupation, and urban residence were agglutinating characteristics. The English-educated were clustered in urban areas; they were sons of professionals and they themselves went into professional employment. They were drawn from the upper castes but they were a separate elite group. English education and a professional life were regarded as the desirable ideal by the rural upper castes in spite of the beginnings of educated unemployment,[50] but it was becoming quite difficult for them to gain entrance into this exclusive elite group.

The size of this elite is difficult to calculate. English literacy might be one possible indication of membership in the elite. According to the 1901 Census only 0.9 percent of the total male population of Bengal was literate in English. Among the male upper caste group 15.7 percent of the _Brāhmaṇs_, 30.3 percent of the _Vaidyas_ and 14.7 percent of the _Kāyasthas_ were literate in English (see Table 1, page 33).

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[49] Seal, _op. cit._, pp. 204-206.

[50] _Rowlatt Sedition Report_, pp. 11-12.

Even using the loose criterion of English literacy among males, the elite was less than one percent of the total population, and less than twenty percent of the upper caste population.[51] However, it is doubtful whether the size of the elite can be accurately determined by a consideration of rates of English literacy since non-professional rural upper caste men might also be literate in English. In the late nineteenth century probably a minimum qualification for entrance into the elite was passing the University of Calcutta college entrance examination. Between 1857 and 1888 approximately 27,000 students had passed the entrance examination.[52] Estimating that not more than 3,000 students had achieved a similar level of education prior to 1857, the English-educated elite numbered 30,000 in 1888. Considering that the upper caste male population was approximately one million,[53] the English-educated elite of 30,000 persons was no more than three percent of the total male upper caste population in 1888. Even taking into consideration the rapid increase of successful

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[51]The number of Vaidyas was less than one tenth of either of the other upper caste groups so their high rate of English literacy did not appreciably raise the general percentage of English literacy among the upper caste population as a whole.

[52]The number of students who passed the University of Calcutta entrance examination from 1857 to 1888 excluding the year 1885 was 26,862. Seal, op. cit., appendix 1, table 47, p. 355.

[53]In 1881-1882 the Brāhmaṇs, Kāyasthas, and Vaidyas of both sexes numbered 2.2 million. Anil Seal, op. cit., p. 42.

candidates for the college entrance examination in the last decade of the nineteenth century, it is unlikely that this elite group exceeded 50,000 or 5 percent of the male upper caste population.

As we have noted in the introduction to this study, the urbanized English-educated professional upper caste group can be defined as the indigenous "Bengali elite," though there were other groups of outsiders who were highly influential in the society of Bengal. The British formed an elite with the greatest influence in politics, although they shared some degree of power with the Bengali elite in the civil service, legislative councils, etc. Large scale industry and commerce was not in the hands of the Bengali elite. The British controlled the only major industry, jute, and also most of the large coal mines in Burdwan. Overseas trade and banking were also dominated by English firms.[54] Beginning in the seventies the Marwaris moved into commerce and moneylending in Bengal. In the late nineteenth century Marwaris shared local trade with Bengali _Bāniā_ castes, and they generally conducted import and export operations through European firms. In 1898 a Marwari business association was formed in Calcutta, and by 1905 they were the principal dealers in such important com-

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[54]V. I. Pavlov, _The Indian Capitalist Class_ (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1964), pp. 357, 369.

modities as cotton cloth.[55] Another influential indigenous Bengali group, with power in the rural areas were the upper caste landlords who retained a degree of control over their tenants.[56] However, the influence of rural zamindārs in this period was generally restricted to local areas. Political organizations with district or provincial scope were dominated by the urban Bengali elite.[57] These urban English-educated upper caste men were an elite in terms of social prestige, cultural influence, and indigenous political leadership in Bengal as a whole. Hereafter, the word "elite" will refer to this group unless otherwise specified.

The writings of English-educated men of the late nineteenth century who became journalists, teachers, and politicians support the argument advanced above that they belonged to a specific elite which was a smaller group than upper caste or "bhadralok" society. They conceived of themselves as belonging to a separate group which they referred to as the "middle class" or "educated middle class."[58] The

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[55]Benoy Ghose, "The Economic Character of the Urban Middle Class in 19th Century Bengal," in Birendranath Ganguli, ed., Readings in Indian Economic History (Bombay: 1964), pp. 145-146.

[56]Pradip Sinha, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

[57]Seal, op. cit., pp. 204, 209-226.

[58]Sisir Kumar Ghose, prominent journalist and politician commonly used the term "educated middle class." See Life of Shishir Kumar Ghose (Calcutta: 1946), pp. 45-59.

Surendranath Banerjea, dominant figure in the politi-

term "middle class" was taken from English usage, but the Bengali elite seemed aware that the characteristics of their group were not quite analogous to the English middle class. Their usage of the term "educated" in conjunction with "middle class" demonstrated their awareness that the Bengali elite group, unlike the British middle class in the nineteenth century, was a professional elite with little basis in commerce or industry. Many members of the Bengali elite were quite disturbed about the lack of Bengali participation in large scale commerce and industry.[59]

Beginning in the eighteen seventies the Bengali elite also showed an awareness that their interests were distinct from those of the landlord and rentier groups. The British Indian Association, founded in 1851 had dominated the politi-

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cal associations of late nineteenth century Bengal, thought in terms of the political rise of the "middle class" in Bengal. See Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in Making (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 40.

Sivnath Sastri, teacher and Brāhma leader, used the Bengali term "Sikhito lok" (educated man) in his analysis of nineteenth century Bengali society. See Sivnath Sastri, Rāmtanu Lahiri o Tatkalin Bangasamāj (Ramtanu Lahiri and the contemporary Bengali society) (Calcutta: New Age Publishers, 1903, 1956), p. 48, as quoted by Warren Gunderson in "Study VI: Modernization and Cultural Change" in Edward Dimock, ed., Bengal Literature and History (East Lansing, Michigan: Asian Studies Center, 1967), p. 167.

[59]See the comments of Prafulla Chandra Roy, famous Bengali scientist, in his Autobiography of a Bengali Chemist (Calcutta: Orient Book, n.d.), p. 19.

cal life of Bengal for two decades. During this period it was a somewhat uneasy union of landlords and professionals including <u>zamindārs</u> and Calcutta intellectuals among its members.[60] In the early seventies prominent <u>zamindārs</u> in the organization became involved in a movement to forestall government interest in tenancy legislation which they viewed as detrimental to their interests. The English-educated professional men became restive with the policy of protecting landlord interests with which they had little connection or sympathy. The Indian Association, founded by Surendranth Banerjea and Ananda Mohan Bose in 1876 to represent the educated "middle class," successfully challenged the older British Indian Association, which afterwards quickly declined.[61] The members of the Indian Association were highly educated and mainly professional men. Information on the education and occupation of 48 of the 85 members of the executive committee from 1876 to 1888 reveals that 31 held university degrees of B.A. or higher. Statistics concerning their occupations, presented in Table 5, show that over half were lawyers, altogether five-sixths were professional men, and only one eighth were landlords.

The professional men of the Indian Association whose landed interests were not at stake took an idealistic view

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[60] Seal, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

Table 5

Occupation of Committee Members of the Indian Association, 1876-1888

Legal profession	26
Journalists and editors	8
Doctor	1
Priests (Christian)	1
Teachers	2
Secretaries of Societies	2
Zamindars	6
Merchants	2
Total	48

Source: Annual Reports of the Indian Association, 1876-1888, as compiled in Anil Seal, op. cit., p. 215.

and supported the tenancy bill of 1885 protecting the rights of cultivators. On the other hand, the Indian Association, which dominated the Bengali political scene from 1876, became quite involved in issues affecting their own occupational interests. Government service was an important avenue of employment for the Bengali elite and they resented any move by the government which prejudiced their chances for government employment. The lowering of the maximum age for the civil service examination by the government, which made it very difficult for Indians to take the examination, was a major political issue for the Indian Association. The Indian Association also agitated for local self-government and increased electoral representation on the legislative

councils.[62] After an initial mix up when a national conference sponsored by the Indian Association and the first meeting of the Indian National Congress met at the same time, the members of the Indian Association played an active role in the Indian National Congress and the Bengal Provincial Congress. The Congress, like the Indian Association, was dominated by English-educated professional men.[63]

The growth in numbers of the English-educated Bengali elite was accompanied by a rapid growth of associations and organizations of all types. The Bengali elite in Calcutta and the district towns created political organizations, lawyers and teachers associations, societies for social and religious reform, literary and debating societies, and reading and study groups.[64] In the political organizations the Bengali elite articulated their own interests and recognized their ties with English-educated elites of other provinces. The rise of literary and cultural societies came during a period of great creativity in Bengali literature led by English-educated novelists and poets who developed Bengali language and literature in new directions. The involvement of English-educated men, prominent in the professions and

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[62] R. C. Majumdar, "The National Movement," N. K. Sinha, ed., The History of Bengal, 1757-1905 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1967), pp. 160-187.

[63] Seal, op. cit., pp. 266-267.

[64] Ibid., p. 204.

government service in religious groups and organizations testified to the interest of the elite in the reinterpretation of their Hindu heritage. In 1874 there were 66 literary and cultural societies in Bengal of which 12 were in Calcutta, 15 were in Presidency Division (central Bengal), 3 were in Burdwan (west Bengal), and 24 in Dacca Division (east Bengal). Six years later the total had risen to 88 including seventeen new associations in Chittagong division of east Bengal. In the next two decades the number of societies more than doubled. Societies and associations were bunched in the central districts around Calcutta and in east Bengal where the Bengali elite were concentrated.[65]

The Bengali elite were involved in a process of slow social change in the late nineteenth century. While small groups of radical social reformers challenged the basic institutions of caste and the joint family, there were slow changes in social norms due to urbanization, mobility and higher education among the elite as a whole. The effect of urbanization is symbolized by the use of the Bengali words bāsā (house) and bāṛi (home). In the early nineteenth century the new urbanites invariably referred to their residence in the city or town as a "house" while they still considered their "home" to be in the village. But in the late nineteenth century many members of the Bengali elite no

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[65]Ibid., pp. 205-206.

longer possessed landed estates. Inevitably their ties with their ancestral villages and the village social system weakened. The use of the word "home" to describe town residences in the late nineteenth century signifies the freedom from village ties which the Bengali elite were experiencing.[66] Urbanization and professionalization did not result in the decline of the joint family system, but the new conditions changed the character of the joint family system to some extent. The extended joint family including distant relations became less common, and smaller units of parents, their sons, wives, and children became more typical of family life among the Bengali elite. Pradip Sinha in his study of social life in the nineteenth century comments on the effect of urban life, "The compulsive association with distant agnatic relations, following from holding common property or from residence in the original ancestral house, was to a large extent diminished."[67] Other social norms were also slightly modified in the metropolis and smaller towns. The rules of commensality which prevented men of different castes from eating together, and restrictions in diet, were no longer so strictly observed by the Bengali elite. Relaxation of such rules was not likely to result in excommunication from caste in Calcutta or in the district towns. The traditional pro-

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[66]Pradip Sinha, op. cit., pp. 10-12.

[67]Ibid., p. 145.

hibition of sea voyage was also relaxed. The abolition of *kulīn* polygamy was generally accepted as desirable among the Bengali elite by the end of the nineteenth century.[68] However, the rule of marriage within caste, which is basic to Hindu society, remained intact for the majority of the Bengali elite.[69]

Although the Bengali elite were drawn from the upper castes, they were distinguished from the upper caste rural landed group by their higher education, occupations, urbanized mode of life, and their tendency to participate in organizations and associations. Their social life was distinguished by a modification of the upper caste joint family and loosening of orthodox caste rules. At the same time there were more links between the Bengali elite and the larger upper caste group than with the rest of Bengali society. One of the important channels of communication between the Bengali elite and the rural upper caste group from which they were derived, was a shared religious orientation. Religious divisions in Bengal approximately followed the line of social stratification between upper and lower castes.

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[68]The *kulīns*, the section of the *Brāhmaṇ* caste with highest ritual status, were in great demand as bridegrooms. They often married many wives without any obligation to cohabit with or support them. See Pradip Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

[69]*Ibid.*, p. 5.

Religious Affiliations of the Bengali Population in the Nineteenth Century

The religious affiliations of the Bengali population closely corresponded to lines of social stratification. In nineteenth century Bengal there were three major religious faiths; Islam, the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Vaiṣṇava faith and the Śakta cult of worship of Durga and Kālī. The followers of Islam were the largest religious group forming slightly over half of the total population.[70] The next most numerous were the Vaiṣṇavas, while the Śaktas were the smallest group. In terms of social prestige the order was reversed. The followers of Śakta cults were generally highest in social status, followed by the Vaiṣṇavas. The large majority of Muslims were cultivators of low social status.

The Śakta cult was predominant among the three upper castes, Brāhmaṇ, Vaidya, and Kāyastha. However, there were exceptions. Some Bengali families of the Brāhmaṇ caste were converted to the Vaiṣṇava Chaitanite cult and became Vaiṣṇava spiritual leaders. There were also Kāyastha and Vaidya Vaiṣṇava families, but the upper castes were generally Śakta.[71] On the other hand, there were a few lower castes such as the Karmakār (ironsmiths) who were predominantly

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[70] In the Census of 1881 the Muslims were 50.6 percent of the total population of Bengal proper. See Seal, op. cit., p. 37.

[71] H. H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol. I, p. 442.

Śakta.[72] The followers of Chaitanya included almost all the Bāniā (trading castes of Śūdra status). Most of the influential Hindu agricultural castes, such as the Kaibarta or Māhiṣya caste of west Bengal and the Namaśūdra caste of east Bengal had a predominantly Vaiṣṇava religious orientation.[73] Kaibarta families also worshipped Śītalā, goddess of smallpox, who seemed to have some affinity with Kālī, but their worship of this deity included singing Vaiṣṇava kīrtan.[74] The Namaśūdra caste integrated worship of Manasā, goddess of snakes, into their predominantly Vaiṣṇava religious ritual.[75] The Vaiṣṇava outlook of these low castes was apparently connected with feelings of resentment against the upper castes. Men of the Namaśūdra caste, who were regarded as "untouchables" were eager converts to new faiths which seemed to offer redress of their low social status. The Muslim cultivators of Bengal were probably for the most part Namaśūdra converts who had changed their religion due to dissatisfaction with their low position in the Hindu hierarchy. The remaining section of the Namaśūdra caste took up Chaitanite Vaiṣṇavism in the

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[72]Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya, op.cit., pp. 241-243.

[73]Ibid., pp. 198-200. Nripenda Kumar Dutt, Origin and Growth of Caste in India (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), Vol. II, p. 156.

[74]Ralph Nicholas, Śītalā and the Art of Printing (paper presented at Duke University Symposium on Language, Arts, and Mass Culture in India, March 13-15, 1970), p. 19.

[75]H. H. Risley, Census of India, Vol. I, India, Ethnographic appendices (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1903), p. 183.

sixteenth century apparently attracted by the doctrine of equality before God.[76]

Among the Muslims of Bengal there was a small elite which was probably descended from Afghans and others who migrated to Bengal as soldiers and administrators. The bulk of the Muslim population, however, were cultivators who had been converted from the lowest strata of Hindu society, and primarily in the rural regions of east Bengal.[77] Thus, religious faith roughly corresponded to social stratification in Bengali society. The upper castes were generally Śakta, and the masses were Muslim or oriented primarily toward Vaiṣṇava religious observances. The upper castes who were distinguished from the rest of the Bengali population by their social prestige, higher levels of education, and dominance of land and the professions, were also separated from lower caste Hindus by their predominant adherence to Śakta rituals. The English-educated professional men who emerged as an elite group toward the end of the nineteenth century shared the religious affiliations typical of the upper castes. They were predominantly Śakta, but there was a Vaiṣṇava minority

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[76]Nripenda Kumar Dutt, op. cit., pp. 149-156. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Christian missionaries also made converts among the Namaśūdra caste.

[77]Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, "Islam in Bengal," in N. K. Sinha, ed., The History of Bengal, 1757-1905 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1967), pp. 574-575.

among the Bengali elite as there was among the upper castes in general.

In 1881 the Hindu and Muslim communities were roughly equal, but by the end of the century Muslims outnumbered Hindus by 22 to 20 million.[78] Prior to the nineteenth century the Muslim and Hindu masses in Bengal were not sharply distinguished. Centuries of contact between the two communities had resulted in interpenetration of local beliefs and customs. The popular Muslim worship of saints was similar to the worship of Hindu deities. The Muslim wandering ascetic was similar to the Hindu sannyāsin. In the nineteenth century this assimilation was arrested by the rise of Muslim fundamentalist reform movements similar to the Wahhabi movement in Arabia.[79] The result of these revival movements was an increase of tension between Hindu landlords and Muslim peasants, and an increase of the consciousness of separateness between the Muslim and Hindu peasant communities.[80]

Religious Attitudes and Beliefs

The Śakta cult of worship of the consorts of Śiva is

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[78]Population growth in west Bengal where Hindus were numerous was slow due to epidemics of malaria, while in east Bengal where Muslims were concentrated population growth was rapid. See Broomfield, op. cit., p. 5.

[79]Jagadish Marayan Sarkar, op.cit., pp. 575-579.

[80]Richard Park, The Rise of Militant Nationalism in Bengal (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1950), pp. 134-135.

is significant in Bengal because it is the faith of the elite. Durga and Kālī are the most important manifestations of _Śaktī_ worshipped in Bengal. In this cult Śiva is the everlasting, unchangeable Godhead, while _Śaktī_ is his cosmic manifestation or active principle. God is beyond good and evil, but his _Śaktī_ brings into being a universe in which good and evil, life and death, creation and destruction, seem real. Thus, _Śaktī_ has both benevolent and malevolent forms. Durga usually personified the benevolent aspect of _Śaktī_. One of the most famous legends of Durga is her cosmic fight with the great demon, which symbolizes her conquest of the force of evil.[81] On the other hand, Kālī is both benevolent and malevolent. She is believed to contain the universe within her womb, and is thus worshipped as the Divine Mother. The devotee assumes the attitude of a child embraced in the all-comprehensive love of the Mother. Kālī has another terrifying aspect, as the symbol of the power of death and destruction. In this aspect she is popularly represented as "Kali, the Black one, adorned with the blood-dripping hands and heads of her victims, treading on the prostrate, corpse-like body of her Lord . . . . She is black with death and her tongue is out to lick up the world; her teeth are hideous fangs. Her body is lithe and beautiful, and her breasts are big with milk. Paradoxical

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[81]Heinrich Zimmer, _Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization_ (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946, 1962), pp. 190-193.

and gruesome . . . ."[82]

Day to day worship in the _Śakta_ cult of Bengal is an individual and family matter. There are no church services in which a congregation participates. The image of the Goddess is kept in a separate room or small building where members of the family pray and give small offerings. The women of the family tend the Goddess with loving care as befitting the Mother of all. Shrines and temples for worship are built and maintained by private, individual contributions. The image in the temple is treated with love as well as reverence. She is usually awakened by music, offered food and garlands, and led to rest in the heat of noon. Goats and sometimes buffalo are sacrificed to Kālī, and to Durga during _Durgapūjā_.[83] Religion assumes a wider social character at the time of the great religious festivals. The October festival of _Durgapūjā_ is a time of family reunion, and joyful festivities in both villages and towns.[84]

The _Śaktas_ of Bengal generally accept the _advaita_ (non-dualistic) metaphysics created by one of the greatest Hindu philosophers, Śaṁkara, who lived in the eighth century, A.D. Śaṁkara interpreted the _Upaniṣads_ to show pure unquali-

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[82] _Ibid._, p. 215.

[83] Jogendra Bhattacharya, _op. cit._, pp. 409-413.

[84] Jyotimoyee Sharma, "Puja Associations in West Bengal," _Journal of Asian Studies_, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3 (May, 1969), pp. 579-594.

fied non-dualism is taught therein. Brahmaṇ is the only Reality, and there is no multiplicity within Brahmaṇ. The world is not a real creation, but an appearance which God conjures up with his inscrutable powers of illusion (māyā). To one who has rid himself of ignorance (avidyā) the cosmic illusion of the world is nothing but Brahmaṇ. Conceived as an illusory show the universe has no beginning and no end; it is an eternal, ceaseless process of creation and destruction, with no positive direction or goal. It is conceived as a cyclical rather than a progressive process.[85]

In the Śakta-Vedānta cult the ultimate goal of the human soul is to pierce the illusion of māyā and realize its identity with the One Reality. The barrier to salvation is attachment to the multitude of objects of this illusory world. Salvation can only be achieved by withdrawal of the mind and senses from the multiplicity of sense objects and cultivation of inner intuition into the nature of reality. Thus, the road to salvation is ascetic withdrawal in the Śakta-Vedānta belief system.[86]

However, this arduous path is not possible for all human beings who may be in different stages of religious

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[85] Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1960), pp. 369-75.

[86] John B. Magee, Sri Ramakrishna and John Woolman: a Study in the Sociology of Sanctity (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1951), p. 178.

development. The religious life of the man who cannot renounce the world was governed by minute ritual regulations derived from the scriptures by the Brāhmaṇ priests. Ritual observances were an important part of Śakta religious life. With regard to human society the good man had to observe social duties which were prescribed for his station in life, according to caste, age, sex, etc. Thus ethics were conceived as particularistice duties, and ethical actions were closely related to particular circumstances.[87] Ethical duties were derived from scriptural authority, but the scriptures were interpreted by the Brāhmaṇ priests, who were influenced by custom and social consensus. As a result, social consensus embodied in social customs was as important as the scriptures in the setting of ethical standards. Revolt against society was considered a serious sin.[88] Withdrawal from society was

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[87]These particularistic duties characteristic of Hindu ethics, were classified by Manu in the early centuries of the Christian era as varṇāsramadharma or the duties of man according to his caste position and stage of life. If the individual performed these duties he ensured the well-being of society and himself. Manu's ethics also included Sādhāraṇadharma or a statement of virtues to be cultivated by all men such as veracity, restraint, cleanliness, etc., but there was little emphasis on universal ethical principles. Hindu ethics generally stressed ritual observance and the duties of the individual as determined by his particular position in society. See S. K. Maitra, The Ethics of the Hindus (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1925).

[88]See Magee, op. cit., pp. 134-139.

tolerated and even approved for the convincingly spiritual person. The traditional Śakta concept of the ideal society was a society with an orderly hierarchy in which social relations were harmoniously regulated according to status. The upper castes who were at the top of the hierarchy were naturally concerned that the social order be preserved.

Vaiṣṇava worship in Bengal was based on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult popularized by Chaitanya in the sixteenth century. Kṛṣṇa worship had been popular in some parts of India in the early centuries of the Christian era, but this was the worship of Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata epic, the hero who ruled as a righteous king and whose wisdom helped the Pāndavas win a righteous war. But this form of Kṛṣṇa worship was not widespread in Bengal. The Bhagavata Purāṇa, which is a basic text of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava school, included a more recent element of the Kṛṣṇa mythology, the story of Kṛṣṇa's youth as a charming cowherd and the devotion of the gopīs (milkmaids) to the charming young god.[89] Later, this cult was elaborated into Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship in which the love of the gopīs is concentrated in the love of a single woman, Rādhā, for the god, Kṛṣṇa. In the fourteenth century the poet Chandidas wrote of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa love in vernacular Bengali. Chandidas was reputed to have been a convert from a Śaivite

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[89]Edward Dimock, The Place of the Hidden Moon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 11-12, 32-33.

Śaktī cult which mirrors the rivalry between Vaiṣṇava and Śakta religious groups in Bengal which persisted in later times.[90]

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many devotional or bhakti cults spread in north India partially due to contact with the devotional spirit of Islam. The most famous Bengali bhakti saint, Chaitanya, was born in 1485 in Nadia in central Bengal. He was a Brāhmaṇ by birth, and he studied and taught Sanskrit. At the age of twenty-two he went on a pilgrimage to Gaya, and returned maddened with the love of Krsna. Soon he became the center of a frenzied devotional cult in Nadia which spread to other parts of Bengal. He was opposed to priestly ritualism, and preached that only through love and devotion can God be realized. His cult included song and dance to produce a state of ecstasy in which the personal presence of God could be realized by the devotee. He laid great stress on the chanting of the Lord's name as a devotional act. Chaitanya came to be regarded as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa or, more specifically, as an incarnation of Rādhā, because his intoxicated love for Kṛṣṇa was a reenactment of the love of Rādhā. Kṛṣṇa was said to have been reincarnated in the form of Chaitanya out of his desire to

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[90]Romesh Chunder Dutt, Cultural Heritage of Bengal (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, n.d.), p. 280.

see Rādhā's love from the inside.[91]

Chaitanya's movement attracted many lower caste Hindu and even Muslims. It is probable that his movement reflected some degree of social unrest among the lower castes against upper caste control. The questioning of the value of ritual by Chaitanya's followers seemed to challenge the predominance of the Brāhmaṇ priests whose power was exercised through their control of the social and religious ritual code. Chaitanya also held a sceptical attitude toward caste, which is typical of bhakti movements in India, but he did not foment a movement to overthrow the caste system. He merely proclaimed that caste has no relevance to the search for religious salvation.[92] Some of the followers of Chaitanya tried to break away from Hindu social laws concerning caste and formed a Vaiṣṇava casteless community, but they were isolated and relegated to a low position in Hindu society. The majority of the followers of the Vaiṣṇava cult of Chaitanya kept within the fold of the Hindu social system.[93] Vaiṣṇava devotees of Bengal generally observe Hindu social rules, including caste. The lay followers are led by spiritual leaders called gosvāmī, who are usually of the Brāhmaṇ caste. They are looked down

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[91]Dimock, op. cit., pp. 128-129.

[92]Ibid., pp. 25-29.

[93]Bipin Pal, Bengal Vaisnavism (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak Ltd., 1933, 1962), pp. 97-99.

upon by some *Śakta* *Brahmaṇs*, but they generally have a respectable position in society. Somewhat less respectable are the *Vaiṣṇava* celibates who live in monasteries. They are generally illiterate and are from *Śūdra* castes.[94] There are also unorthodox *Vaiṣṇava* groups who live a wandering but not celibate life. A prominent example are the *Bāuls*, a community of wandering minstrels, who compose songs on the love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The *Bāuls* do not accept any divisions between man and man, such as caste. The *Vaiṣṇava* tradition in Bengal is a tradition of popular devotional cults. Chaitanya's movement was originally a popular movement. In the nineteenth century new *Vaiṣṇava* cults continued to arise among the Hindu lower castes. The *Kartābhajā* sect, for example, was begun by a man of *Sadgopa* caste (*Śūdra* agricultural caste) whose claim of special spiritual powers gave him power and prestige in several districts of west Bengal.[95]

Ordinary *Vaiṣṇava* worship is not too different from that of the *Śakta* cult, nor are the two types of worship mutually exclusive. *Vaiṣṇava* worship is distinguished by devotional gatherings of lay followers of the same type as the devotional gatherings of Chaitanya and his followers. An atmosphere of intense religious feeling is created by singing

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[94] Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, pp. 459-480.

[95] *Ibid.*, p. 486.

and repetition of the name of the Lord (Hari, Kṛṣṇa, Rām).[96] Men and women dance and weep in a manner somewhat similar to the devotionalism of some fundamentalist Protestant sects.

Unlike the Śaktas of Bengal, Vaiṣṇavas do not accept Samkara's unqualified non-dualism. The emphasis in Vaiṣṇava religion is on devotion to God rather than on union with God. The dual relationship of lover and loved one requires recognition of the soul as an entity separate from God. Vaiṣṇava metaphysics take the position of outright dualism or qualified monism. The great Vaisnava saint of Bengal, Chaitanya, was a strong opponent of Śaṁkara's advaita (unqualified non-dualism). Chaitanya held that God and his creation are both united and divided in an inscrutable way. Man and God are at the same time one and separate, and the man-God relationship is best conceived as the relationship of love.[97]

According to Vaiṣṇava doctrine, salvation can only be achieved in the bliss and ecstasy of love of God. Love of God is modelled on human experience of love in four modes: filial love, friendship, parental love, and love between man and wife.[98] The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult views the romantic love of

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[96]Bipin Pal, Bengal Vaisnavism, pp. 65-67.

[97]Kanailal Dutt and Kshetra M. Purkayastha, The Bengal Vaishnavism and Modern Life (Calcutta: Sribhumi Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 53-69.

[98]Bipin Pal, Bengal Vaisnavism, pp. 52, 57.

woman for man as the culmination of disinterested devotion, and seeks to cultivate this attitude in devotion to God. The love of Rādhā and the gopīs for Sri Krsna in the garden of Brindavan is a life drama of central spiritual significance for man.[99]

The Vaiṣṇava view of the universe as cyclical and non-progressive was similar to the Śakta view. However, the dualism or qualified non-dualism of Vaiṣṇava metaphysics permitted the universe and the human soul independent reality. According to the qualified non-dualist view, God is both immanent and transcendent, and his immanence in the world assures its reality. In the dualist view the universe is separate from God as an independent reality. In either case, the world and the human soul are real.

The Vaiṣṇava concept of the ultimate human goal is not union with God as in the Śakta doctrine. Vaiṣṇava devotees conceive salvation as the bliss of everlasting love of God. The ideal religious life is withdrawal from society to seek the love of God.[100] At the outset most new Vaiṣṇava sects proclaim this ideal as a universal one for all men. Vaiṣṇava reform movements in the initial radical stage generally aim at the creation of a fellowship of the faithful withdrawn from Hindu caste society. But as Vaiṣṇava sects became more orthodox they almost always compromised with caste and rituals

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[99] Kanailal Dutt and K. M. Purkayastha, op. cit., p. 72.

[100] Magee, op. cit., pp. 239-240.

and social duties required by society. The ordinary person only sought the bliss of the love of God intermittently in devotional social gatherings through song and dance, and only the saint withdrew from society. Only a few deviant religious communities like the Bāuls did not accept the dictates of society.[101] Most Vaiṣṇavas accepted the ethics of their society which stressed particularistic social duties based on social status. Their religious ideals suggested possibilities of more universalistic ethical concepts, but in practice, only those who withdrew from society undertook a universal outlook. The Vaiṣṇava concept of an ideal society envisioned equality within the fellowship for the faithful, but in practice they accepted the existing social hierarchy and their place in it. Outside of communal devotional gatherings, they retained egalitarian ideas only in the religious sense that all men were considered eligible for salvation regardless of caste.

The Śakta upper castes always held a slightly superior attitude toward the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Vaiṣṇava faith. They were suspicious that egalitarian mixing in devotional gatherings was socially undesirable and led to sexual license. Vaiṣṇava questioning of the value of ritual was also regarded as dangerous to the social order.[102] But actually the Vaiṣṇava cult, with the possible exception of deviant sects like the

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[101] K. M. Sen, Hinduism (Baltimore: Penguin, 1961, 1963), p. 104.

[102] Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya, op. cit., pp. 487-488.

Bāuls, did not pose an effective threat to the social order or upper caste dominance. The ethics of "respectable" Vaiṣṇava devotees were particularistic and conformed to scripture and social tradition. The ordinary man was held in the round of ritual and social duties, while the saint could withdraw from society to pursue love of God. Neither Vaiṣṇava or Śakta doctrine encouraged action for social change.

The Christian missionaries in Bengal paid more attention to the Śakta-Vedānta faith of the upper castes than to Vaiṣṇava cult. The characteristic missionary attitude was that Śakta-Vedānta and its monistic or non-dualistic doctrine were a most serious threat to the foundations of morality. Dr. Duff, a prominent Protestant missionary to Bengal in the nineteenth century, was very critical of Hinduism in his book, India and India Missions published in 1839.[103] He attacked the Vaiṣṇava Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult as immoral but his most serious attack was reserved for Vedānta. According to Duff, Vedānta was a pantheistic doctrine which by assuming God and the universe to be one, undermined all distinctions between good and evil. In 1882 a Scottish missionary and educator, William Hastie, stirred a controversy among the Bengali elite

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[103] Alexander Duff, India and Indian Missions (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1839). For the Bengali reaction see Muhammad Mohar Ali, The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities 1833-1857 (Chittagong: Mehrub Publications, 1965).

by attacking Vedānta as a negative idealism which provides no foundation for practical activities of life or interest in science, and allows no moral meaning to life, for all is illusion including the individual soul. He proposed that Indian progress depended on adoption of Christianity.[104] The Śakta faith of the upper castes which was also the faith of the Bengali elite, was thus under heavy missionary attack as a faith whose basic metaphysical outlook denied the reality of God and the soul and thus undermined all moral and material progress. The English-educated professional Bengali elite, most of whom grew up in the Śakta-Vedānta religious tradition, were seriously disturbed by this criticism of their religious beliefs. Since they had been exposed to western thought and had accepted the concept of progress as an important value, they were particularly sensitive to the missionary charge that Hinduism was responsible for lack of progress in India.

Prior to the nineteenth century new religious movements among Hindus in Bengal were mainly Vaiṣṇava cults appealing to the lower castes. These movements were occasionally led by men of the upper castes but the participants were mainly from the lower castes. In the late nineteenth century there was a series of religious movements whose participants

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[104] Statesman, September 23, 1882, reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, pp. 110-115.

were members of the Bengali elite. These movements had important consequences for the development of attitudes and outlook among the Bengali elite and their own image of themselves as a group. The new religious movements, which were partially a response to Christian missionary attacks on Hinduism, also involved the attitudes of the Bengali elite toward the British administration, a separate elite group above them with which they could not merge. Furthermore, in view of the stratification of Bengali along religious lines, the new religious groups and ideologies emerging among the elite were important for the development of the relationship between the Bengali elite and other segments of Bengali society, Hindu lower castes, and Muslims. The most important religious movements of the late nineteenth century were the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, the Neo-Vaiṣṇava movements and the Neo-Vedānta of Vivekananda.

CHAPTER III

Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj

The Formation of the Sādhāran Brāhma Samāj

The *Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj* was a religious reform organization, formed in 1878 by a dissident group which broke off from the *Brāhma Samāj of India*. The original *Brāhma Sabhā* was founded in 1828 by Ram Mohan Roy and his associates who wished to purge Hindu religion of idolatry and polytheism by returning to the purity of the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*. He believed that these ancient scriptures supported monotheism and he rejected existing polytheistic worship. He also advocated reform of social customs such as *satī* (widow immolation) which he sought to prove were not sanctioned by the ancient Hindu scriptures.[1] After the death of Ram Mohan Roy, the *Brāhma Sabhā* was revived as the *Brāhma Samāj* by Debendranath Tagore, son of the nineteenth century Bengali industrialist, Dwarkanath Tagore. Debendranath at first based his religion on the infallibility of the *Vedas*. In response to missionary attacks on the infallibility doctrine he sent out four *Brāhmaṇ* pandits to Banares to study the texts. When they discovered doctrinal contradictions, Debendranath decided that religious

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[1] David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengali Renaissance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 200.

truth is revealed by God to man through direct intuition as well as through the scriptures.[2]

In 1855 Keshab Chandra Sen, an English-educated young man of Vaidya caste, joined the Brāhma Samāj and quickly became a subordinate leader. Keshab Chandra became the center of a younger group which advocated a radical social reform program including education for women and denunciation of the caste system. The more conservative Debendranath could not countenance such radical social reform, and in 1865 there was a split over the question of whether ministers of the Brāhma Samāj should wear the sacred thread, signifying upper caste status. Keshab Chandra Sen and the younger members who had demanded that Brāhma ministers discard the sacred thread formed a new Samāj, the Brāhma Samāj of India. They decided to promote intercaste marriage and female education. The older section, led by Debendranath which continued to observe many caste rules, was henceforth known as the Ādi Brāhma Samāj.[3] Keshab Chandra's section attracted the most membership and was the most active branch of the Brāhma Samāj between 1865 and 1878. Brāhma doctrines spread in the district towns as well as Calcutta, and Keshab Chandra went on

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[2]G. S. Leonard, History of the Brāhmo Samāj from its rise to 1878 A.D. (Calcutta: Adi Brāhmo Press, 1878, 1935), pp. 170-183.

[3]Ibid., p. 6.

lecture tours to other parts of India. At first Keshab Chandra proclaimed that religious reform should include the reform of the whole society, but later he lost some of his reforming zeal to the dismay of younger members of the group. In the seventies he became fascinated with the devotional aspects of Christianity and Vaiṣṇavism and he began to build a personal devotional cult.[4] He elaborated the idea that God's truth is intuitively received which had replaced the doctrine of the infallibility of the scriptures in Debendranath's thought. Keshab now proclaimed that aside from ordinary human intuition, great men, such as the Buddha and Christ, receive special revelations from God. Furthermore, Keshab himself was proclaimed to be the bearer of a special and universal divine revelation, the New Dispensation, which would unite all religions and combine the best in the messages of all previous prophets.[5]

In the late seventies a group within Keshab's Brāhma Samāj became sceptical of the adoration of his person and his new doctrinal emphasis. The dissidents claimed that the emphasis on devotionalism was diverting energies away from the Brāhma Samāj program of religious and social reform.

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[4] Prem Sundar Basu, Life and Work of Brahmananda Keshab (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publication Committee, 1940), pp. 326-327. See also Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brāhmo Samāj, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Brāhmo Mission Press, 1919 and 1920), Vol. I, pp. 217-227.

[5] Sitanath Tottvabhushan, The Philosophy of Brahmaism (Calcutta: Brāhmo Mission Press, 1908), p. 8.

They warned that the reform aspects of the Brāhma movement would disintegrate into personal adoration of the guru (teacher) as countless Vaiṣṇava reform movements had done before.[6] The dissident group also objected to the doctrines of revelation and New Dispensation. They understood Debendranath's original doctrine of intuition as belief that the individual conscience is the ultimate source of religious truth, and they objected to the use of the doctrine of intuition to exalt Keshab as a great prophet.[7]

Furthermore, the new group took a more radical stance on questions of social reform and church government. The dissidents advocated higher education for women. Keshab ad-

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[6]The fears of the dissidents were expressed in an article in the Brahmo Public Opinion entitled "Devotion and Piety," Vol. 1, No. 7 (May 2, 1878), p. 56.

> . . . there has been a tendency in the Brahmo Samaj of India to extol devotion above every other phase of religious character. Under that name the wildest license has been allowed to the growth of religious sentimentalism . . . . To caution our friends against an extravagant indulgence of this phase of religious life, we have simply to remind them of the results that such partial cultures have produced amongst the followers of Chaitanya. What other section of the native community is so devout? What other section does cultivate the devotional feelings so much? Who can rival them in bhakti, yet alas! who can rival them in recklessness of character? Has their devotion practically elevated society? or has it successfully regenerated the individual? India has had enough of devotees . . . .

[7]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, p. 15.

vocated some education for women, but he feared that higher education would defeminize.[8] The progressives also agitated for organized and democratic church government. Keshab countered this demand by saying that church government should be conducted according to divine inspiration, but the progressives maintained that this doctrine merely veiled autocratic control by Keshab.[9]

The split finally came when Keshab married his thirteen year old daughter to the prince of Kuch Behar. Keshab had earlier taken a strong stand against child marriage, and he had supported the special marriage act which established the minimum age of marriage for girls at fourteen.[10] The pro-

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[8]Protap Chunder Mazoomdar, The Faith and Progress of the Brahmo Samaj (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publication Committee, 1882, 1934), pp. 136-138.

[9]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. I, p. 265.

[10]Keshab's Brāhma Samāj had led the agitation for the Native Marriage Act of 1872 which sanctioned unorthodox Brāhma marriages. A person who acknowledged that he was not a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc., could be married under the special provisions of the Act. Such persons had to abide by a prohibition of polygamy, a legal allowance for divorce, no caste bar, and a minimum age limit of eighteen for men and fourteen for women. The Brāhmas did not wish to declare themselves non-Hindus, but this declaration was included to allay orthodox Hindu opposition. The Ādi Brāhma Samāj did not endorse the Act because it did not wish to become alienated from Hindu society. Keshab Sen's Samāj accepted the Act and Brāhmas were married under its provisions. See Charles Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 92-94.

gressives claimed that Keshab had abandoned the principles of the Brāhma Samāj.[11] On May 15, 1878 they seceded and formed the Sādhāraṇ (Universal) Brāhma Samāj. The schism was very acrimonious. Keshab's side went so far as to say that the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma support for female emancipation was a cloak for licentious behavior.[12] There was a bitter dispute over the control of the Brāhma Mandir (temple) in Calcutta which ended in the ejection of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas. However, the majority of the branches of the Brāhma Samāj went with the progressives. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj was the largest and most influential Samāj in the late nineteenth century.[13] The development of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and the other two Brāhma Samājes in the late nineteenth century has received very little attention compared with the scholarly work done on the impact of Ram Mohan Roy in the earlier half of the century. The cursory treatment of Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas in the general literature on social and political development in modern Bengal contains faulty generalizations and oversimplifications about their ideology and political attitudes. Most works exaggerate their pro-western and pro-Christian position

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[11] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. 1, No. 2 (March 28, 1875), pp. 10-12.

[12] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. III, No. 42 (October 28, 1880), p. 498.

[13] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. I, p. 279.

and their isolation from Bengali society.[14] Moreover, nationalist historians tend to denounce them as lacking in national feeling and gloss over their extensive political activities.[15]

The remnants of Keshab's Samāj came to be called the Nabajīban (New Life) Brāhma Samāj. In the years between 1878 and his death in 1884, Keshab Chandra Sen expostulated his doctrine of New Dispensation. After his death the most prominent leader was Protap Chandra Mazoomdar. However, other groups made alliances to deprive Mazoomdar of control, and the Nabajīban Brāhma Samāj disintegrated into factions. In the public eye the Nabajīban became closely associated with Christianity. Actually different factions were disputing whether their faith should be Christ-centered or Keshab-centered. The Nabajīban Brāhma Samāj was stymied by factionalism and had little importance in late nineteenth century Bengal.[16]

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[14]See Nemai Sadhan Bose, The Indian Awakening and Bengal (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960); Pradip Sinha, Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965).

[15]See Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Growth of Nationalism in India, 1857-1905 (Calcutta: Presidency Library, 1957). For further discussion see section on Sādhāraṇ Brahmas and politics below.

[16]For a discussion of the later history of the Nabajīban Brāhma Samāj see Manilal C. Parekh, The Brahma Samaj: A Short History (Kathiawad: Oriental Christ House, 1929).

Debendranath's Ādi Brāhma Sāmāj was also a small group. Debendranath was very much worried that too radical a social reform program would alienate the Brāhma Samāj from Hindu society, and thus reduce the possibility of influencing Hindu society to gradually adopt reforms. After Keshab seceded in 1865 Debendranath deleted the innovations introduced by the younger leader.[17] Rajnarain Bose was the most active leader of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj, until poor health led him to leave Calcutta in 1872. The Ādi Brāhma Samāj was not very active after this. The Tagore family itself dominated the membership and the only important branch was located in Calcutta. Some of the younger members of the Tagore family questioned their father's social conservatism but the Ādi Brāhma Samāj was not a significant force in the social reform movement.[18] Although the influence of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj as an organized group was slight, some of the individual members played an important role in Bengali cultural and political movements in the late nineteenth century.

Program of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj

The practical program of the Sādhāran Brāhma Samāj included both religious and social goals. The leaders of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj first turned their attention to provid-

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[17] P. C. Mazoomdar, op. cit., p. 143.

[18] Manilal Parekh, op. cit., pp. 203-205.

ing a firm foundation for their religious organization. Their first concerns were the writing of a new constitution and the construction of a new mandir in Calcutta. A constitutional committee deliberated for several months. The provisional constitution was circulated among the provincial samājes, and it was adopted in a general meeting in September 1879. The constitution provided that membership required a belief in the fundamental principles of the Brāhma Samāj, and a small sum as annual subscription. The members had the right to elect the President, vice-President, Secretary, Assistant secretaries, Treasurer, and a general committee of twenty-five members. The general committee in addition included representatives from each of the affiliated provincial samājes. The executive committee included ten members elected from the general committee and office bearers. The executive committee appointed Sādhāraṇ Brāhma missionaries to spread the faith. Changes in the constitution required a majority vote.[19]

The new mandir was opened in 1881. At this time a declaration of Sādhāraṇ religious principles was made:

> . . . we dedicate this Hall to the worship of the One True God. From this day its doors shall be open to all classes of people without distinction of caste or social position . . . . This great, holy Supreme God alone shall be worshipped here, to the exclusion of every created person or thing; and no divine honours shall be paid to any man or woman as God, or equal to God, or an incarnation of God, or as specially appointed by God. It shall ever be born in mind in this Hall,

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[19] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 15 (June 27, 1878), pp. 157-158.

> that the great mission of Brahmoism is to promote spiritual freedom amongst men and to enable them to establish direct relationship with God . . . .
>
> It shall be the object of all our preachings and discourses in this place, to teach men and women to love God, to seek purity, to hate sin, to grow in devotion and spirituality, to promote purity amongst men and women, to uproot all social evils, and to encourage virtuous deeds . . . .[20]

According to this dedication the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj supported monotheism and was against idolatry. They emphasized the direct relation of man to God with no human intermediaries. The uprooting of social evils was declared to be a religious duty.

The religious program of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj included weekly prayer services at the mandir in Calcutta and in the mandirs and meeting places outside Calcutta. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj religious services were a form of congregational worship. Congregational worship began with the singing of hymns, then the minister recited Upaniṣadic texts and delivered a short adoration of the beneficent qualities of God which was followed by a period of silent meditation and prayer. Then the congregation sang another hymn, and the minister preached his sermon. A final hymn closed the service.[21] At the beginning of each year a

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[20]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 151-153.

[21]Sitanath Tattvabhushan, Brahmaism: Its Principles and Practice (Calcutta: Brahmo Mission Press, n.d.), pp. 21-22.

Sādhāraṇ Brāhma festival was held during which Brāhmas from all parts of Bengal gathered in Calcutta.[22] A students weekly service was started in 1879 with lectures and discussions on religious, social, moral, and occasionally political subjects. In 1882 a Theological Institution was founded for lectures and discussions on religious and philosophical topics.[23] The ordained missionaries traveled all over Bengal and to other parts of India to spread the Brāhma message. They were particularly important as links between the provincial branches and the central branch in Calcutta.[24]

The form of religious worship and church organization adopted by the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj closely resembled liberal Protestant sects. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma adoption of missionary techniques and social service work as part of religion is also similar to Christian practices. It cannot be doubted that the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas and other branches of the Brāhma Samāj in India were greatly influenced by the example of the Christian missionaries in India.[25] The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj

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[22] Eighteenth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1895 (Calcutta: Sadhara Brahmo Samaj Office, 1896), pp. 6-8.

[23] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 134-135, 160.

[24] Ibid., p. 120.

[25] For information on the influence of Christian Missionaries see: Sushil Madhav Pathak, American Missionaries and Hinduism (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967).

had a particularly close relationship with the Unitarian Church of England and America. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas rejected the orthodox Christian doctrine of trinity as a dilution of strict monotheism, and recognized their close affinity with the doctrines of Unitarianism. Unitarian ministers when visiting India preached from Brāhma pulpits, and several Brāhmas preached from Unitarian pulpits in England. In 1896 an English Unitarian minister came to India and arranged for the granting of an annual scholarship to be awarded alternately to different members of the three Brāhma Samājes to study theology at Manchester.[26] The English Unitarians also made direct contributions to a committee of the three Brāhma Samājes for famine relief and social work in India.[27] Theodore Parker's sermons were reported to be the "most favourite scripture of the leaders of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj."[28]

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj was dedicated to the belief that religion must be applied to practical life. Keshab's lack of concern with social reform in his later life had been one of the principal causes of the schism. The periodical

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[26] The Nineteenth and Twentieth Annual Reports of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1896-1897 (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Office, 1899), p. 9.

[27] Report of the Brahmo Samaj Committee, 1896-1905 (Calcutta: Gupta, Mukherjee and Co., n.d.), pp. 1-2.

[28] Bipin Chandra Pal, The Brahmo Samaj and the Battle for Swaraj (Calcutta: Brahmo Mission Press, 1926).

organ of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj stated the position of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in this fashion: "The Brahmo Samaj has also a social mission to perform. It seeks to reconstruct society on principles consistent with a Theistic system of beliefs."[29] The actual social reform programs of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj included female emancipation, education, the uplift of workingmen and depressed castes, and famine relief. In a recent work on the history of the social reform movement in India Charles Heimsath has suggested that the social reform movement declined after the 1880's in Bengal, and the Brāhmas showed less reforming zeal in this period.[30] It is correct that there was no one major reform issue comparable to Vidyasagar's widow remarriage movement in the sixties and seventies. However, the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas continued and expanded their efforts for female emancipation and education and the number of Bengali girls graduating from schools steadily increased. They also pushed intercaste marriage and widow remarriage, and continued their attacks on many aspects of the orthodox social system, from caste to authoritarianism in the joint family.

Female emancipation was one of the most important programs of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. A leader of the Samāj expressed the reason for their dedication to female emanci-

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[29] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 26 (September 12, 1878), p. 286.

[30] Heimsath, op. cit., pp. 263-264.

pation in these words: "The conviction is daily strengthening in them that women are the proper guardians of peace and purity in human society, and that the freer they are, the better is that duty performed."[31] According to Sādhāraṇ Brāhma policy the daughters of members should be given education, they should be married at the minimum age of fourteen, they should not be married without their own consent, and men and women should have the opportunity to mingle in religious and social gatherings. In contrast, orthodox Hindu society frowned on education or free choice in marriage for women, and maintained social segregation of the sexes.[32] In 1881 the ladies of the Calcutta Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj started a Bengal Ladies Association which met weekly for prayer, readings, and discussion. They also held occasional social parties for both sexes, to the horror of the orthodox. Similar women's groups were associated with the provincial samājes. The members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj were also active in the promotion of girls' schools. The Brāhma Girls' School in Calcutta was opened in 1890 and by 1900 it had 138 pupils.[33] In 1883 when the first two women received a B.A.

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[31] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 265-66.

[32] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 26 (September 12, 1878), pp. 284-85.

[33] Twenty-third and Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1900-1901 (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Office, 1902), p. 14.

from Calcutta University one was a member of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj.[34] In 1884 a lady first occupied the pulpit of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. A home for young widows which trained them to be teachers was opened by a branch of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj led by Sasipad Banerji in a suburb of Calcutta.[35]

The members of the Samāj believed that education was essential for the uplift of Indian society, and they were involved in many educational projects. In 1879 an English school up to the university entrance standard was organized by some members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in Calcutta. Within a few years the school became so popular that it was reorganized with a college curriculum and named the City College.[36] Schools and libraries were also fostered by the provincial samājes.[37]

The work for the spread of English education and female emancipation was primarily concerned with the needs of the Bengali elite. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj also attempted to create social service missions to uplift the masses. Their

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[34] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 42 (January 16, 1879), p. 473.

[35] "Sasipad Banerji," Some Noted Indians of Modern Times (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1892), p. 106.

[36] Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose (Calcutta: A. C. Sarkar, 1910), p. 97.

[37] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 303, 343, 388.

programs included night classes for workingmen, uplift of depressed castes, temperance and famine relief work. The activities for workingmen were almost entirely due to the inspiration of Sasipad Banerji, who lived in the jute mill area north of Calcutta. He established a workingmen's club and journal, and a night school.[38] His inspiration did not spread partly due to the fact that industrial workers were a very small percentage of the Bengali population in the late nineteenth century. Another field of endeavor was the uplift of degraded castes and tribal groups. In Dacca, the East Bengal Brāhma Samāj, which was affiliated with the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, sent a missionary to a Namaśūdra (low status śūdra cultivating caste) village to spread enlightenment. Similar missions were sent to the pirāli (degraded) Brāhmaṇs of Baganchra in Jessore but with no lasting results in either case.[39] The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj was never successful in launching a program attractive to the lower castes such as the purification program that the Ārya Samāj began in western India. Apparently, the elite feelings of the upper caste membership interfered somewhat with their ideals of social service, and prevented them from making effective contact

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[38] The Twenty-first Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1898 (Calcutta: The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Office, 1899), p. 28.

[39] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 344, 382.

with the lower castes.[40] The Khasi Hill Mission for the tribal people of Assam was established in 1889 with a medical dispensary, and schools were added later. Their upper caste social status was less of an obstacle in dealing with people outside the Hindu hierarchy than in dealing with the Hindu lower castes. There were many conversions, and this was the only mission that successfully appealed to a group outside the Bengali elite. The _Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj_ also had a charity fund, and a famine relief program.[41]

From the above description of the practical program of the _Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj_ it can be seen that their organization advocated social service and desired gradual social change. They hoped that the adoption of a religion cleansed of superstition and the spread of female emancipation and education would free their society from stagnation, and result in both moral and material improvement. Although the means with which the _Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas_ tried to change Hindu society were not radical, they were very radical in their questioning of the totality of Hindu belief and custom. They questioned the caste system, the family system, and the position of women in Hindu society. In other words they questioned the

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[40] Munindra Nath Roy, _The Spirit of Brahmoism_ (Calcutta: M. N. Roy, 1926), p. 83.

[41] _The Nineteenth and Twentieth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1896-1897_, pp. 7-9.

fundamental institutions of their own society.

With regard to caste the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas took a most radical view. While other reformers said caste had some good and some evil points, and should be changed, the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas took the position that caste is at present an unmitigated evil and should be eliminated. In their periodical organ the caste system was attacked because caste distinctions: (1) deny the brotherhood of man, (2) make national union impossible, (3) sap national strength by suppressing talent, (4) inhibit growth of commerce and economic development, (5) stand in the way of travel necessary for cosmopolitan development, (6) have led to depreciation of labor in India, and (7) have resulted in the degeneracy of marriage since necessity of marriage within caste encourages child marriage and polygamy.[42]

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were no more favorable to the institution of the joint family. The Brahmo Public Opinion remarked "Parents and unmarried children make a very pleasant group, but in every family the chance of peace and order are less as the number of distant relations is greater."[43] In the Bengali upper caste joint family system a man and his wife lived with their grown up sons and daughter-in-law and their children. Often various numbers of lateral relations also

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[42] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. III, No. 34 (August 12, 1880), pp. 289-340.

[43] Ibid., Vol. I, No. 36 (December 5, 1878), p. 404.

lived in the same family group. The extended family group fulfilled most of the social needs of the individual. Within the extended family group obedience is expected to elders and those higher in status. Obedience to parents is the first duty of children even when they are grown. Wives are expected to adjust to the family group of their husbands and to be obedient to his elder relations. In upper caste families in the nineteenth century women were generally secluded in the inner rooms, and observed some degree of pardā. A modest woman could not speak to her husband in presence of older relatives. Women were almost without exception illiterate.[44] The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were disposed to be critical of the excessive control of parents over children, and the complete separation of the sexes within the family.[45] They generally

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[44]Jyotirmoyee Sarma, "Formal and Informal Relations in the Hindu Joint Household of Bengal," Man in India, Vol. 31, No. 2 (April-June, 1951), pp. 51-71.

[45]An article in a Sādhāraṇ Brāhma journal complained:

> . . . . the home should be so constituted as to be a real help to the spiritual and moral elevation of its members . . . . But alas, what a melancholy contrast does a Hindu home present to this sweet and ennobling picture . . . . First of all, the severest restrictions are imposed upon the female members mixing freely with their male relatives . . . . After a certain age, all the male members confine themselves, during most of the hours of the day, to the outer apartments allotting the inner ones to the ladies of the house. The sexes are not allowed to dine together, nor have anything in common in the shape of amusement . . . . Strict decorum also forbids free mixing of the male members with each other. A father must not be too free or too jovial in the presence of his grown up sons. Nor must the sons do as much in his

favored the nuclear family as in English society.

It is evident that the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj desired social change along the lines of Western, or more specifically, British society. They adopted congregational services and a form of church government similar to Protestant sects, and adopted social service as an integral part of religion. Furthermore, they envisioned a society without rigid caste barriers and with a nuclear family system and more freedom for women. They also desired industrialization and eventual political democracy along the lines of British policy.[46] It is evident that they wished to develop a modern society, and they accepted British society as a working model.

For comparative purposes it will be interesting to note the position which the Ādi Brāhma Samāj took with regard to social change. In the period from 1875 to 1905 the main leaders of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj were Rajnarain Bose (died 1899) and Debendranath Tagore's sons, Dwijendranath, Satyendranath, Jyotirindranath, and Rabindranath. As a whole the members of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj feared that too radical a

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presence as laugh heartily. The father is a perfect stranger to the tastes and ways of a grown up son. If such a one has a little taste for music or some other kind of amusement, he must seek its gratification outside his home, for custom looks upon it as indecorous even to whistle a little tune in the presence of the father or an elder brother."

The Indian Messenger, Vol. II, No. 6 (October 12, 1884), p. 43.

[46] See the discussion of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and nationalism below.

social reform program would result in alienation from Hindu society, which would defeat any hope of Brāhma reforms being widely accepted.[47]

The Ādi Brāhmas generally believed that although social change and development were required, it need not be on the Western model.

Rajnarain Bose believed that social change should be based on the foundation of Hindu social and religious culture. He saw much that was evil in contemporary Western culture.[48] He recognized the need for change and development of Hindu society but he wanted it to take a different path than Western society. He proclaimed in a speech made in 1872 that "Hinduism presented also a much higher social idealism, all its outer distinctions of caste notwithstanding, than has as yet been reached by Christendom."[49] On this basis he believed that a renaissance and purification of Hindu tradition would desirable. He tried to promote the development of Bengali literature and culture and Sanskrit culture. In this spirit he cooperated with Nabagopal Mitra, another member of the

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[47] P. C. Mazoomdar, op. cit., p. 143.

[48] Rajnarain Bose, Religion of Love (Calcutta: B. M. Press, 1894), pp. 125-27.

[49] Rajnarain Bose, Hindu Dharmer Śreṣṭhatā (The Superiority of Hinduism), translated quote from Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times (Calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1932), Vol. I, p. 260.

<u>Ādi</u> <u>Brāhma</u> <u>Samāj</u>,[50] to establish the Hindu <u>Melā</u> (fair) in 1867.[51] The Hindu <u>Melā</u> was an annual function to popularize Bengali literature and songs, indigenous arts, crafts, and industries, and physical culture.[52] Rajnarain supported many of the same social reforms supported by the <u>Sādhāraṇ</u> <u>Brāhmas</u> but on a different basis. He felt it necessary to demonstrate that the reforms he advocated were in consonance with the Hindu scriptures. He was a firm supporter of widow re-marriage and female education (both of which could be justified by the scriptures), though he was opposed to the <u>Brāhma</u> Marriage Act of 1872, which he thought did not have adequate scriptural basis, and would result in the alienation of <u>Brāhmas</u> from Hindu society.[53]

The younger Tagores were more open to the possibility of incorporating Western ideas and practices for the improvement of Hindu society than the older group led by Rajnarain Bose. They were suspicious of Rajnarain's talk of the glory of ancient Hinduism. The eldest son, Dwijendranath, used to remind Rajnarain that special care should be taken to prevent

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[50] Nirmal Sinha, <u>Freedom Movement in Bengal, 1818-1904, Who's Who</u> (Calcutta: Government of West Bengal Education Department, 1968), p. 280.

[51] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 281.

[52] Ibid., pp. 281-282.

[53] Rajnarain Bose, <u>Ātmacarit</u> (Autobiography) (Calcutta: Orient Book Company, 1909), pp. 70-71, 84.

the revival of what was not suitable to the age.[54] In 1888 Rabindranath wrote a bitter satire on the follies of the Hindu revivalists,[55] but the Tagore brothers also deplored imitation of the English for the sake of imitation because they felt that lasting change in Hindu society must be built on indigenous foundations. An interesting example of the spirit with which they approached the problem of change was the development of female dress suitable for wearing outside the home. The way in which the *śaṛi* was worn in the inner women's apartments was not considered proper for upper caste women appearing in public. The *Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas* at first solved this problem by dressing their women in European style.[56] Satyendranath Tagore and his wife designed a blouse and a style of draping the *śaṛi* which was accepted as suitable for outings.[57] The Tagore brothers and their cousins played a leading role in the Hindu *Melā*. They composed songs, poems and plays, and contributed to the arts and crafts shows.[58] Rabindranath Tagore felt that the reform and regeneration of

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[54] Nimal Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

[55] Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 135.

[56] Dwijidas Datta, *Behold the Man* (Calcutta: 1939), p. 59.

[57] Krishna Kripalani, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[58] Nimal Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-268, 288-289, 289-291, 279, 383.

Indian society depended on the stimulation of village life. When he managed his father's estates in north Bengal in the nineties he developed his ideas that India's regeneration depended on the stimulation of village agriculture, crafts and small industries, village festivals and fairs, rather than imposition of social reforms from the top.[59] The people themselves would awaken and create a new life and a new culture.

While the Ādi Brāhmas searched for an indigenous model for social reform, the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas believed that social change and modernization could not help but be modelled on western society.

Sādhāran Brāhma Theology

Although the Ādi Brāhma Samāj took a different view on the problem of social change, the theological position of the two Brāhma Samājes was essentially similar. They were both strongly opposed to the absolute monism of Śaṁkara which was popular among the Bengali upper castes who adhered to the Śakta sect. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma criticism of Śakta-Vedānta was almost exactly the same as the missionary criticism voiced by Duff and Hastie. According to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas unqualified non-dualism as a metaphysical doctrine divorced religion from morality. They argued that Śaṁkara's doctrine

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[59]Sudhir Sen, Rabindranath on Rural Reconstruction (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1943).

necessarily induced a negative withdrawal attitude since it denied the ultimate reality of the world and of human endeavor within the world. In this way advaita Vedānta was pictured as a doctrine which undermined the foundations of positive moral action. According to Sivnath Sastri who held the office of president and missionary of the Brāhma Samāj:

> The old theism of ancient India, ordinarily known as Vedantism, and subsequently developed into pantheism by Sankaracharya, was essentially anti-social. Its philosophy turned upon an analytical process of reasoning which looked upon the world with all its relations as a delusion and a snare. Accordingly it laid very great insistence upon detachment from the world as the most effective means of attaining spiritual perfection. Such teachings naturally led to mendicancy, with which this country is so rife. Thus the most spiritually disposed persons of the nation were drawn away from society, thereby depriving men of their personal influence and example.[60]

In the same article he went on to attribute India's political and economic backwardness as well as moral stagnation to the prevalence of the doctrines of advaita Vedānta which prevented active involvement in the moral and social improvement of man.[61]

The chief objection the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas had to absolute monism was that it proclaimed everything but Brahmaṇ to be illusory and thus denied the reality of the world and the soul. To counter this the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas adopted the philosophical

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[60] Sivnath Sastri, The Brahmo Samaj: Religious Principles and Brief History (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1915, 1958), pp. 16-17. [The Sādhāran Brāhmas use the terms advaita Vedānta and pantheism as though they were synonymous.]

[61] Ibid., p. 18.

attitudes of dualism or qualified non-dualism. Sivnath Sastri, who generally leaned toward dualism, saw God as the creator and stressed the independent reality of his creation, the world and the human soul.[62] On the other hand, Hem Chandra Sarkar, a prominent Brāhma missionary, was inclined toward the doctrine of qualified non-dualism. According to Sarkar, God is both transcendent and immanent in the universe. However, he did not conclude that the immanence of God meant that the universe is illusory. On the contrary, he argued that the doctrine of immanence assures the reality of the universe and human soul in that they partake of God.[63] He also stated that God must have beneficent attributes in contradistinction to Śaṁkara's doctrine that Brahmaṇ does not have qualities. Hem Chandra Sarkar's doctrine is non-dualism in that he stresses that God is immanent in the universe; it is qualified because God is given attributes and the universe is regarded as real.

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas agreed that the universe and the human soul have real existence. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas insisted that the soul of man cannot be considered illusory or as identical to God as in the advaita Vedānta of Samkara. According to the Sādhāran Brāhmas the soul must have individual

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[62]Ibid., p. 15.

[63]Hem Chandra Sarkar, The Religion of the Brahmo Samaj (Calcutta: The Classic Press, 1906, 1913), p. 37.

reality for morality to be possible. "The individuality of man is the axiom as well as the postulate of all religion. Deny the individuality of man, deny the existence of the soul as an individual, responsible agent or entity, and all religion, all morality will at once collapse . . . . Man is from God, in God, of God, but he is not God."[64]

Rajnarain Bose and Rabindranath Tagore of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj held similar metaphysical doctrines. Rajnarain believed that God was immanent in the world and at the same time superintended it.[65] Rabindranath believed that God is at the same time one with the universe and separate from it. The relationship between God and the universe envisioned by Rabindranath is like that of the lover and the loved one. Lovers cannot realize their love if they are absolutely separate, nor can they realize their love if they completely merge into one another.[66] Rabindranath held that the human soul and the multiple finites of the universe are real and valuable. The finite and the individual are necessary for the realization of God's infinite love. Tagore wrote of the value of the individual soul, "We are absolutely bankrupt if we are deprived of this specialty, this individuality . . .

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[64]Hem Chandra Sarkar, The Religion of the Brahmo Samaj, p. 34.

[65]Rajnarain Bose, The Religion of Love, p. 1.

[66]Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore (Baroda: Good Companions Publishers, 1918, 1961), p. 21.

only through it can we gain the universe more truly than if we were lying within its breast unconscious of our own distinctiveness. The universal is ever seeking its consummation in the unique."[67] Thus, Tagore like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, believed that the universe and the human soul are real and valuable as individual entities rather than illusory.

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas viewed the cosmological process as progressive in contrast with the cyclical view of traditional Hinduism. They looked forward to the moral and material progress of man and the creation of a kingdom of God on earth in the future rather than in the past. "Our only care should be not to render our allegiance to truth, love, and justice individually but also to strive for their establishment in the world. Let every Church struggle for this true kingdom of God."[68]

With regard to the ultimate religious goal of man the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas stressed the bliss of loving devotion to God and the harmony of the human will with the will of God. They condemn the goal of absorption in God. According to Sivnath Sastri salvation is a state of harmony between the Son and the Father or the soul and God, "where there is no extinction or annihilation of his separate entity as a child, not

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[67]Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913), p. 70.

[68]Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. III, No. 21 (May 20, 1881), p. 246.

absorption with the Supreme Being, but perfect harmony between his will and the will of the Father through love and self-surrender."[69] With regard to the religious life for man the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj made no distinction between the ordinary man and the saint. They vehemently condemned the mystical tendency to withdraw from the world to pursue religion and asceticism. They also condemned the cultivation of religious ecstasies by Vaiṣṇava devotees.[70] According to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas the religious life is the cultivation of love and obedience to God in the individual soul and the extension of this inner light to intercourse with others. Furthermore, they believed that religion and morality in the individual is related to the growth of morality in society. According to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma periodical organ it would be desirable to

> . . . adopt and live by a faith that does not satisfy itself by raising ecstacies or leading people away into the regions of unpractical mysticism but seeks to impart vigour and symmetry to the soul; t[illegible] regenerates society by regenerating the individual; that helps in building up a God-fearing and God-honouring life; that dost not fly the world but runs its streets, wields its hammers and goes through all its drudgery with the silent witness of a superior spirit within.[71]

In another article the Brahmo Public Opinion declared:

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[69] Sivnath Sastri, The Brahmo Samaj: Religious Principles and Brief History, p. 27.

[70] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. III, No. 9 (February 26, 1880), pp. 102-103.

[71] Ibid., Vol. I, No. 7 (May 2, 1878), p. 56.

> Some people have a foolish notion that religion should not be meddlesome; it should steer clear of all social and political questions. Religion is a thing of the soul and let it always remain an affair between the soul and its God, say they; but they forget that the soul has also a moral existence in this world--and moral obligations pertaining to that existence.[72]

Rabindranath and Rajnarain of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj also denied that the ultimate goal of man is absorption into the universal. The true religious life for man was not the withdrawal of the senses from finite objects. Rabindranath passionately argued that the ascetic ideal in Hinduism was false and defeatist. In a play written at the age of twenty-two,[73] Rabindranath tells the story of a sannyāsin (ascetic) who tries to cut himself off from human relations and objects of sense in his attempt to realize the infinite. He finally realizes that through asceticism he is only reaching emptiness. The love of a child brings him to realize the futility of ascetism, and he decides that love and care for others in the finite world is the best road to the Infinite. According to Rabindranath "This work may be looked upon as an introduction to the whole of my future literary work; or, rather this has been the subject on which all my writings have dwelt . . .

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[72] Ibid., Vol. III, No. 21 (May 20, 1880), p. 246.

[73] Krishna Kripalani, op. cit., pp. 106-107. The play Prakṛtir Pratiśodh (Nature's Revenge) has been translated into English under the title "The Ascetic" and is included in the anthology Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore (London: Macmillan and Co., 1967), pp. 461-481.

the joy of attaining the Infinite within the finite."[74] Rajnarain Bose also felt that the religious life for man is not withdrawal from the world but love and work in the service of God and man. Rajnarain, like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, believed that religious principles must be made active in social service. He wrote: "Works are as much necessary for the Religion of Love as communion. We can best show our love to the Beloved by serving his creatures whom he loveth."[75] The religious life for man conceived by both the Ādi Brāhmas and the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas was a life of ethical activism within society.

Sādhāraṇ Brāhma ethical concepts gave central importance to the human conscience. The original founder of the Brāhma Samāj, Ram Mohan Roy, had regarded the Vedas and Upaniṣads as the ultimate scriptural authority for ethics for the Hindus. The second leader, Debendranath Tagore, had also postulated the infallibility of the Vedas for a time. Both of these leaders believed that the ethical concepts of these scriptures were in some ways contrary to current customary morality. They advocated a return to the scriptures in the hope of reform and improvement. But when Debendranath suspected that some of the Upaniṣads could be interpreted to support advaita Vedānta (which he regarded as harmful to true

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[74] Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences (London: Macmillan, 1917, 1942), p. 238.

[75] Rajnarain Bose, Religion of Love, p. 36.

religion and morality),[76] he discarded the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas and he placed his faith in human intuition. Keshab Chandra Sen later interpreted intuition to mean special divine revelations to particular holy persons. But the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj vigorously denounced Keshab's special revelation and special dispensation doctrines. The Sādhāraṇ interpreted intuition to be the ability given by God to each human conscience to distinguish between good and evil. According to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma periodical, the Indian Messenger:

> What is the highest moral mission of Brahmoism? To proclaim the majesty of the human conscience, to give conscience the highest authority in regulating human conduct. Before it, every other authority, either of religious scriptures or of great men, is a thing of secondary importance. They are acceptable as long as they do not clash with the divine voice, and are to be rejected if that voice bears testimony against them.[77]

This doctrine of the human conscience as the ultimate ethical arbiter is an individualistic doctrine. It upheld individual perception of right and wrong against the consensus of society. In an editorial the Brahmo Public Opinion upheld the view that the individual conscience must be the guide of behavior even

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[76] Debendranath wrote in a letter, "The Brahmo religion has to be protected from three dangers, the first danger is idolatry, the second is Christianity and the third the Vedantic view." Debendranath Tagore, The Autobiography of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore (trans. Satyendranath Tagore) (Calcutta: S. K. Lahiri, 1909), app. p. ix.

[77] Indian Messenger, Vol. II, No. 38 (May 31, 1885), p. 298.

if it clashes with the dictates of society.

> Public opinion is often a great safeguard against vice. Weak as men's religious beliefs and sentiments often are, they would in many cases be tempted to commit things which they are prevented from committing simply for fear of public opinion . . . . But it is not the only means, nor should we attach an undue importance to it. It happens not infrequently that this fear engenders a morbid state of the feelings and prevents its victim from following out the dictates of his conscience when they are against the cherished opinions and feelings of the society in which he has the good or bad fortune to live. Are there not many among our educated countrymen, whose intellects have been freed from the shackles of superstition and idolatry, but who yet cannot act according to the dictates of their conscience simply for fear of society? . . . nor can the code of morality which has public opinion for its only standard be very high. No man, much less a man of religion, should make that the guide of his life, the principle of his conduct. The man of religion has a higher standard to follow, a loftier and nobler code to be guided by - the eternal rules of absolute morality - the will of God as revealed through conscience. When public opinion comes into collision with that no consideration should induce us to sacrifice the latter at the altar of the former. What we believe to be our duty we should do at all hazards, let society cry against our conduct with the voice of thunder.[78]

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj believed that ethical standards should be internalized in the individual conscience. The inner conscience of man was more important than the scripture or social consensus which orthodox Hindu society considered so significant.

Since the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj based their ethics on individual conscience they opposed the mere ceremonial performance of social and religious rituals. They opposed the

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[78]Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. III, No. 30 (July 22, 1880), p. 353.

particularist and ritualistic code of orthodox Hinduism. Instead they believed that God reveals to man certain universal ethical principles. In upholding the inner conscience of man as an ethical guide they did not expect each man to live according to a law of his own. They were confident that there are certain universal ethical ideas. They proposed that love for God and love for fellow men should be the basic guide of life.[79] This basic ethical feeling is within all men; it is only necessary for the human judgment to apply it to specific situations, and for the human will to have the strength to uphold the ethical intuition of the conscience.[80]

Rabindranath Tagore was also repelled by the ritualism and ceremonialism of orthodox Hinduism. In the family journal, Bhāratī, he wrote an article in 1885 pointing out the inhumanity of many Hindu precepts. He gives the example of a man on a religious pilgrimage seeking God. He sees a traveler dying on the wayside but does not help him because he might be an untouchable and touching him would result in ritual impurity.[81] According to Rabindranath this is the death of religious feeling which he believed should be based on the

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[79] Hem Chandra Sarkar, The Religion of the Brahmo Samaj, p. 58.

[80] Ibid., p. 70.

[81] Benoy Gopal Roy, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore (Bombay: Hind Kitab Publishers, 1949), pp. 94-95.

universal principle of love.[82] Rajnarain Bose expressed the same idea when he wrote, "Love of God and Love of man are the two principal factors in the Religion of Love."[83] The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma and the Ādi Brāhma Samāj were in agreement that man's conduct should be guided by universalistic ethical principles.

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas rejected Samkara's advaita Vedānta and adopted a dualistic view of the nature of reality or qualified non-dualism which upheld the reality of the world and soul. They challenged the cyclical cosmology of Hinduism and substituted a belief in progressive evolution of the universe and human society. They also rejected the Hindu institution of sannyāsa as the ideal religious life. They believed that withdrawal from society by the sannyāsin was an evasion of moral responsibility and they called for positive commitment to serve one's fellow men within society. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas attacked the particularistic Hindu code of ethics, and adopted a universal ethical criterion which gave them a basis upon which to challenge social norms. They also challenged the basis of Hindu ethics in the scriptures and upheld the concept of individual ethical judgment. The ethics of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj provided a justification for challenge of traditional social customs.

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[82] Ibid., pp. 97, 105.

[83] Rajnarain Bose, The Religion of Love, p. 36.

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were opposed to religious doctrines of both the Śakta-Vedānta and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Vaiṣṇava sect of Bengal. They accepted the missionary view that traditional Hinduism was an obstacle to progress in India. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were primarily interested in ethics because they wanted to provide a religious basis for their challenge of social customs, but they accepted the missionary view that basic Hindu beliefs concerning the nature of reality must be changed in order to build a better society. According to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas the metaphysics of Śaṁkara's advaita Vedānta with its belief that all reality is one and the appearance of multiplicity is illusory was responsible for the stagnation of Indian society. The denial of the reality of the world and soul was said to have undermined positive moral commitment to action within society and to have encouraged religious men to withdraw from society. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were also opposed to the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Vaiṣṇava faith although their metaphysical views on the nature of reality were similar. They shared the general upper caste view that the comparison of love of God to love of a woman for man in the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa sect led to immoral religious practices, a criticism which was also frequently voiced by the missionaries.[84] Furthermore, they believed that the Vaiṣṇava

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[84]Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 35 (November 28, 1878), p. 394. Indian Messenger, Vol. XII, No. 22 (June 9, 1895), pp. 173-74.

emphasis on the cultivation of religious ecstasy of love shifted emphasis away from the need for moral action. The cultivation of religious ecstasy was seen as an escape from the world similar to the ascetic withdrawal ideal of Śakta-Vedānta.[85]

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma reformist Hindu doctrine was obviously heavily indebted to liberal Christian thought. The democratic religious organization of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and their social service program were modelled on the Unitarian example. Moreover, the American Unitarian, Theodore Parker, was reported to have been the favorite religious thinker of Sādhāraṇ Brāhma leaders.[86] The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma creed of conscience as guide for ethics was almost identical with Parker's concept of conscience as the "voice of God."[87] Furthermore, Parker's doctrine that religious principles are applicable to every part of life influenced the Brāhma creed of ethical activism within society.[88] The Brāhma rejection of ceremonialism and the Brāhma belief in the basic goodness of man enthroned in the human conscience are also said to

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[85] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 7 (May 2, 1878), pp. 55-56.

[86] Bipin Pal, The Brahmo Samaj and the Battle for Swaraj, p. 65.

[87] Munindra Nath Roy, op. cit., p. 103.

[88] Bipin Pal, The Brahmo Samaj and the Battle for Swaraj, p. 65.

reflect Unitarian influence.[89]

It is significant that in spite of Sādhāraṇ Brāhma admiration for Christianity and their borrowing of liberal Christian doctrine they did not become Christians. The idea of simply adopting a Western religion made them uncomfortable and they preferred to think of themselves as reformers of Hinduism. Although they believed the individual conscience should take precedence over scriptural authority, they tried to find a basis for their religious doctrine in the ancient Hindu scriptures, the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. The religious services of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj always included recitation of passages from the Upaniṣads which supported monotheistic Brāhma beliefs. Members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj wrote works on Indian saints such as the Buddha and the Bengali Hindu saint Chaitanya. The Sādhāraṇ philosophical writers, Sitanath Tattvabhushan and Nagendranath Chatterji, challenged the Brāhma rejection of Śaṁkara's advaita Vedānta and tried to show that non-dualism is compatible with Brāhma beliefs in social activism.[90] Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas at times stressed the universal nature of their faith but at other times they saw themselves as the vanguard of a new Hinduism. They believed that Brāhma doctrine would reform Hinduism and at the same time defeat the challenge of Western Christianity

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[89] Munindra Nath Roy, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

[90] Sitanath Tattvabhushan, Philosophy of Brahmaism, pp. 37-38.

which could not be met by traditional Hinduism.[91] According to Brāhma leader Sivnath Sastri, "Brahmoism" should not be regarded "as Christianity in another guise" because "the mission of the Brahmo Samaj is to combine the East and the West. It turns to the East, to the rishis of ancient India, to find the secret of true spiritual communion . . . . But it also turns to the West to receive an inspiration for the service of man as the service of God."[92] He spoke of Brāhma doctrine as a synthesis of the best in East and West. While the Brāhmas wanted the social and political development of India to be based on Western models, they tried to find a basis in ancient Hindu scriptures for an active ethics of social change to support their program. Their statements of their aims and goals were often contradictory; on the one hand they accepted Western religion and society as a model for progress, but at the same time they searched for an indigenous basis for change, and talked of the need for synthesis of Eastern and Western, Hinduism and Christianity.

Membership of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj

The main source for information on the leadership of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj are the annual reports which include

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[91] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. III, No. 1 (January 1, 1880), pp. 6, 7.

[92] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 275-76.

lists of members of the executive committee of the central Samāj in Calcutta. From these lists some idea of the caste affiliations of the leadership can be ascertained. In Bengal certain names are typical of certain castes. Some names are applicable to only one caste while others indicate several possibilities. On the basis of name classifications this study will attempt to determine whether the new members were primarily from the upper castes or not. The symbol "U" will be used for names which are almost certainly upper caste, and the symbol "PU" for probable upper caste. The symbol "E" will be used if a name might indicate either upper or lower caste status. If a name definitely indicates Brāhmaṇ, Kāyastha, or Vaidya these will be indicated in parentheses (b), (k), (v). The names which appear in this study of caste affiliation of the membership of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and their classification are given in Table 6.

In the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma annual reports the names of executive council members are followed by the college degrees earned by the individual. Since some of the members of the executive committee were well known, their occupations have been ascertained from other sources. Tables 7 and 8 present the names, caste classification, college degrees, and occupations (where information is available) of the executive committee of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj for sample years 1895 and 1900.

Of the eighteen members of the executive committee in

Table 6

Classification of Bengali Names

Name	Caste Affiliation	Classi-fication
Acharji	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)
Biswas	Honorific title, any caste	E
Bose (Basu)	Kāyastha	U(k)
Chatterji (Chattopadhyay)	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)
Chakravarti	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)
Das	Upper or lower caste	E
Das Gupta	Vaidya	U(v)
Dutt (Datta)	Kāyastha	U(k)
Ganguly (Gangopadhyay)	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)
Ghose (Ghosh)	Kāyastha	U(k)
Guha	Kāyastha	U(k)
Haldar	Honorific, any caste	E
Maitra	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)
Mitra	Kāyastha	U(k)
Mukherji (Mukhopadhyay)	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)
Naha	Kāyastha	U(k)
Roy (Ray)	Honorific, probable upper caste	PU
Roy Chaudhury	Honorific, probable upper caste	PU
Sanyal	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)

Table 6 (Continued)

Classification of Bengali Names

Name	Caste Affiliation	Classi-fication
Sarkar	Honorific, any caste	E
Sastri	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)
Sen	Kāyastha, Vaidya, Sōnār Bāniā	U
Sukul	Brāhmaṇ	U(b)

Source: Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya, Hindu Castes and Sects (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1896).

1904 all except Guru Charan Mahalanobis were Bengalis. Fourteen of the seventeen Bengalis were upper caste, and the other three were probable upper caste. It is also interesting that twelve out of eighteen had at least a B.A. degree, and out of these ten had a higher degree. Undoubtedly, this was an English-educated group with exceptionally high educational qualifications. All the members for whom occupational information was available had government or professional jobs. The most common profession was college teaching.

In 1900 out of sixteen Bengalis on the executive committee, eleven were upper caste and four were probable upper caste. In this year, eight out of sixteen had college degrees. Again all the members for whom occupational infor-

Table 7

Name, Caste Classification, College Degrees, and Occupation of Members of the Sādhāran Brāhma Samāj Executive Committee in 1895

Name	Caste Classi-fication	College Degree	Occupation
Ananda Mohan Bose	U(k)	B.L., M.A.	Lawyer[a]
R. N. Ray	PU	M.A.	Civil Service[b]
Aghorenath Mukherji	U(b)		
Sasibhusen Bose	U(k)		
Guru Charan Mahalanobis	-		
Sivnath Sastri	U(b)	M.A.	Professor[c]
Dwarkanath Ganguli	U(b)		Schoolteacher[d]
Prankrishna Acharji	U(b)	M.A.	Professor[e]
Heramba Chandra Maitra	U(b)	M.A.	Professor[f]
Krishna Kumar Mitra	U(k)	B.A.	Professor[g]
Madhusudhan Sen	U		Civil Service[h]
Kali Sankar Sukul	U(b)	M.A.	Professor[i]
Ramendanda Chatterji	U(b)	M.A.	Professor[j]
P. K. Ray	PU	D.Sc.	Professor[k]
P. C. Ray	PU	D.Sc.	Professor[l]
Bankubehary Basu	U(k)		
Umesh Chandra Dutt	U(k)	B.A.	Professor[m]
Govindra Nath Guha	U(k)	M.A.	

Source: Eighteenth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1895, p. 5.

[a]Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., p. 349.

[b]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, p. 239.

Madhusudhan Sen	U		Civil Service[h]
Kali Sankar Sukul	U(b)	M.A.	Professor[i]
Ramendanda Chatterji	U(b)	M.A.	Professor[j]
P. K. Ray	PU	D.Sc.	Professor[k]
P. C. Ray	PU	D.Sc.	Professor[l]
Bankubehary Basu	U(k)		
Umesh Chandra Dutt	U(k)	B.A.	Professor[m]
Govindra Nath Guha	U(k)	M.A.	

Source: Eighteenth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1895, p. 5.

[a]Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., p. 349.

[b]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, p. 239.

[c]Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., p. 339.

[d]Brajendranath Bandyopadhyaya, Dvārakanāth Gango Pādhyāy (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishak, n.d.), p. 6.

[e]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, p. 168.

[f]Ibid., p. 170.

[g]Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., pp. 394-395.

[h]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, p. 339.

[i]Ibid., p. 258.

[j]Ibid., p. 272.

[k]Ibid., p. 338.

[l]Prafulla Chandra Roy, Autobiography of a Bengali Chemist (Calcutta: Orient Book, n.d.), p. 20.

[m]Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., p. 279.

Table 8

Name, Caste Classification, College Degrees, and Occupation of Members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj Executive Committee in 1900

Name	Caste Classification	College Degree	Occupation
Guru charan Mahalanobis			
Sashi bhushan Bose	U(k)	M.A.	
Kunjalal Ghosh	U(k)		
Lalitmohan Das	E	M.A.	
M. M. Bose	U(k)	M.D.	Physician[a]
Krishnakumar Mitra	U(k)	B.A.	Professor
Uneshchandra Dutta	U(k)	B.A.	Professor
Heramba Chandra Maitra	U(b)	M.A.	Professor
Prankrishna Acharji	U(b)	M.A.	Professor
Madhusudhan Sen	U		Civil Service
P. K. Ray	PU	D.Sc.	Professor
Kalinarayan Ray	PU		
Mohendranath Chatterji	U(b)		
Banikanta Roy Choudhuri	PU		
Hridaymohan Bose	U(k)		
Bepin behari Roy	PU		
Annadaran Sen	U		

Source: Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1900-1901, p. 1.

[a]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, p. 264.

mation was available had government or professional jobs, and teaching was the most common profession.

Information about the characteristics of the leaders of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj is also available for one of the affiliated provincial samājes, the East Bengal Brāhma Samāj

in Dacca for the year 1904. Since these leaders were less well known than the leaders in Calcutta it was not possible to ascertain their occupations. Table 9 presents the names of the executive committee of the East Bengal Brāhma Samāj, their caste classification, and their educational qualifications.

Table 9

The Names, Caste Classification, and Educational Qualifications of the Members of the Executive Committee of the East Bengal Brāhma Samāj

Name	Caste Classification	College Degrees
Heramba Chandra Maitra	U(b)	M.A.
Satischandra Ghose	U(k)	
Brojendrakumar Guha	U(k)	B.A.
Revatimohan Das	E	
Jyotirindraprasad Mitra	U(k)	B.L.
Bhubanmohan Sen	U	B.A.
Nepalchandra Roy	PU	L.M.S.

Source: The Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1904 (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Office, 1905), p. 85.

Out of the seven members of the executive committee of the East Bengal Brāhma Samāj, five were definitely upper caste. Their educational qualifications were also impressive; five out of seven had college degrees. In view of their educational qualifications it is likely that they also held prestigious civil service and professional jobs.

There is much less information available on the

general membership because the *Sādhāraṇ* *Brāhma* *Samāj* did not keep statistics on membership or even a yearly record of the names of members. However, in the year 1904 a list of new members was compiled. From this list some idea of the caste affiliations of the general membership can be ascertained. Table 10 presents the names of new members in the year 1904 classified according to caste:

Table 10

Classification of Names of New Members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in 1904

Names	Classification
1. Nirupama Haldar	U(k)
2. Rai Ramakrishna Sanyal Bahadur	U(b)
3. Debendranath Datta	PU
4. Jogidhan Roy	PU
5. Srishchandra Ray	PU
6. Gurucharan Naha	PU
7. Nagendranath Chakravarti	U(b)
8. Ramakanta Ray	PU
9. Anulkuchandra Das Gupta	U(v)
10. Gopalchandra Sen	U
11. Giribala Ray	PU
12. Kusumkumar Bose	U(k)
13. Santilala Bose	U(k)
14. Rajanikanta Das	PU
15. Surendranath Datta	U(k)
16. Subala Biswas	E
17. Nisikanta Bose	U(k)
18. Sumalibala Bose	U(k)
19. Fanibhushan Banerji	U(b)
20. S. Ray	PU
21. Mohini Mohan Bose	U(k)
22. Satischandra Ghosh	U(k)
23. Man mathamehan Das	E
24. Atulkrishna Biswas	E
25. Benodini Mitra	U(k)
26. Manoranjan Haldar	E
27. Kshirodasundari Das	E

Table 10 (Continued)

Classification of Names of New Members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in 1904

Names	Classification
28. Jogeswar Mitra	U(k)
29. Srischandra Ray	PU
30. Benimadhab Mitra	U(k)
31. Nabagopal Dutta	U(k)
32. Benidevehari Das	E
33. Mahendralal Sarkar	E
34. Suprabha Sarkar	E
35. Beharilal Bose	U(k)
36. Saratchandra Das	E
37. Saralasundari Das	E
38. Narendranath Datta	U(k)
39. Harendramohan Sarkar	E
40. Kusumkumari Sarkar	E
41. Saratchandra Haldar	E
42. W. M. Das	E
43. Durgamohan Das	E
44. Nalinikanta Chatterji	U(b)
45. Bidhumukhi Ghosh	U(k)

Source: The Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1904, pp. 42-43.

Out of these 45 members, 21 were upper caste and 9 were probably upper caste, while 15 of the names could be either upper or lower caste. These figures suggest that the membership was generally upper caste, a finding which is supported by British observations on the Brāhma Samāj, and the comments of the Brāhmas themselves. According to W. W. Hunter the Brāhmas in Dacca (largest center of Brāhmaism outside of Calcutta) were from Brāhmaṇ, Vaidya, and Kāyastha families and the Brāhma organization was essentially a town

sect with appeal for college students and among the English-educated generally.[93] Sivnath Sastri, the historian of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, also remarked that Brāhmaism appealed to the educated and "respectable" classes.[94] The general membership, like the leadership of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, was thus in all probability drawn from the Bengali elite.

Outside of Calcutta, east Bengal was the area where the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj had the greatest impact and the largest membership. The second largest Brāhma Samāj had been founded in Dacca in 1845, and had sided with the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas in 1878. In 1903 this branch had 106 members and its own missionary organization which disseminated the ideas of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in east Bengal and Assam. It included a prayer hall, a student's weekly service, a library, and a home for missionaries, and a depressed classes mission. Other strong branches of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj were located in Barisal, Mymensingh, and Sylhet. The Barisal Brāhma Samāj established in 1861 had a student's weekly service, a library, and a Sunday school. In 1904 the Sylhet Brāhma Samāj had 45 members, and the Mymensingh branch had 33 members.[95] These

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[93] W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal (London: 1876), Vol. VI, pp. 58, 117.

[94] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 276, 326.

[95] The Twenty-first Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1898, pp. 7-10.

Brāhma branches in the district towns of east Bengal had close ties with the Dacca branch as well as the central congregation in Calcutta which had 140 members in 1896.[96]

Although some branches of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj existed all over Bengal, the membership was concentrated in Calcutta and the towns of east Bengal which were the areas of high concentration of the Bengali elite population. Calcutta, and secondarily Dacca, were the centers of the movement. There is no precise information on the educational qualifications of the membership at large, but the leadership of the central branches had an English education. An exceptionally high proportion of these leaders had college degrees. In all cases where information on occupation was available their high educational qualifications led to prestigious jobs in the civil service and even more often in the professions. They were typical of the successful Bengali elite of the late nineteenth century.

The number among the Bengali elite who chose to advocate the radical social reform program and radical theological position of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas was quite small. In 1891 the leadership counted 1,677 members,[97] and the government Census of 1901 recorded 3,118 Brāhmas of all three sects in Bengal

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[96] The Nineteenth and Twentieth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1896-1897, p. 8.

[97] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, p. 562.

of which 1,816 were men and 1,302 were women.[98] In view of these figures it is unlikely that the number of male members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj ever exceeded 1,000. This represented only a very small fraction of the upper caste male population of approximately 1.1 million. However, 1,500 Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas represented a larger percentage of the 30,000 to 50,000 members of the Bengali elite, roughly 2 to 3 percent.

Although the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj was only a small group within the Bengali elite they were more influential than their numbers suggest. In spite of the controversy over their social practices, there were many members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj who were greatly respected in the society of the Bengali elite of the late nineteenth century. The two leading Bengali scientists of the period were Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, the physicist Jagadis Chandra Bose, and the chemist, Prafulla Chandra Roy.[99] Ananda Mohan Bose and Durga Mohan Das were prominent lawyers at the Calcutta High Court, the peak of success in the eyes of the elite. Prominent college professors and educators included P. K. Ray, Nil Ratan Sarkar, Brajendranath Seal, K. K. Mitra, Heramba C. Maitra and Sivnath Sastri.[100] Several Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas

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[98]Ibid., p. 563.

[99]Munindra Nath Roy, op. cit., p. 251.

[100]Ibid., pp. 249-52. Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmos Samaj, Vol. II, p. 338. (See also life sketches given below.)

achieved high positions in the civil service. Ananda Mohan Bose served in the Bengal Legislative Council and the Government Education Commission of 1882, Shib Chunder Deb as Deputy Collector at Midnapore, and R. N. Ray was an officer in the Government Accounts Department.[101] Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas also played a prominent role in nationalist political organizations, the Indian Association, the Bengal Provincial Congress, and the Indian National Congress.[102]

Pradip Sinha in his study of the social history of Bengal in the nineteenth century has suggested that in the late nineteenth century the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were "socially isolated from the large traditionally minded educated and partly educated middle class."[103] He is probably right with regard to the partly educated or with regard to upper caste society as a whole, but there is no evidence that the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas had become isolated or alienated from their own group, the English-educated Bengali elite, in the late nineteenth century. Their professional success and their activities as political leaders guaranteed them respect among the elite.

In the metropolis and the provincial towns the social

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[101] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmos Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 239-240.

[102] Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in Making (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1925, 1963), pp. 41, 89.

[103] Pradip Sinha, op. cit., p. 126.

differences between Brāhmas and orthodox Hindus of the elite were no longer so serious a barrier to social intercourse and the exchange of ideas as had been the case earlier in the century. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhma lawyers necessarily had contact with other members of their elite profession. The prominent role of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas in higher education both in Calcutta and in the provincial towns put them in touch with members of the new teaching profession as well as the students. Their political associations also put them in touch with other influential men in the Bengali elite. Earlier in the century Brāhma converts had been ostracized in Calcutta and the east Bengal towns. They faced the threat of excommunication, and in extreme cases they were denied servants and essential services as well as association with family and fellow castemen.[104] However, by 1875 most of the major towns had a core of twenty families or so which orthodox Hindu social pressure could not break down. In this later period social tensions subsided somewhat due to growing tolerance among the English-educated.[105] The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were undoubtedly isolated from Bengali society as a whole but they had a respected position within the Bengali elite.

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[104]Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I (Calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1932), p. lii.

[105]W. W. Hunter, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 197.

Individual Motivation for Joining the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj

In this section we will investigate the lives and attitudes of five prominent leaders to determine the individual motivations which led them to challenge orthodoxy and join the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. Our five subjects have been selected on the basis of three criteria: (1) prominence in leadership of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, (2) prominence outside Brāhma circles, and (3) availability of biographical and autobiographical data. The five leaders who will be considered are Ananda Mohan Bose, prominent in politics and social reform movements; Sasipad Banerji, a leader of education and social reform; the political leader Bipin Pal; the religious leader Sivnath Sastri; and the philosopher Sitanath Datta.

Ananda Mohan Bose

Ananda Mohan Bose was born in 1847 in a Kāyastha family of Mymensingh in east Bengal. His grandfather had amassed riches in the salt business and his father was a government officer in a district court of Mymensingh. The family had a house in Mymensingh town, and Ananda Mohan attended an English school in this town. In 1863 when he went to Calcutta at age sixteen to study at Presidency College, a house was rented for him and his cousins.[106] A brilliant student he won a scholarship to study law in

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[106] Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose, pp. 2-20.

England, and became an advocate on the Calcutta High court upon his return. He was not fond of law, regarding it as merely a means of making a living, while he led an active life as an educationist, and a political and religious leader.[107] He cooperated with Surendrenath Banerjee in founding the Indian Association in 1876, supported the Indian National Congress, and was appointed President of the latter organization in 1898.[108] In the field of education he helped to establish the City School in Calcutta in 1870, which became a college in 1881, and he founded a school for the higher education of women.[109] He was an active member of the Syndicate of Calcutta University, and as a member of the government Education Commission of 1882 he asked for reform of the university system.[110] Ananda Mohan was an important leader during the formation of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. A strong advocate of democratic procedures in church government, he was the chief architect of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma constitution, and he was eight times elected President of that organization.[111]

Ananda Mohan Bose became a Brāhma in 1869 at the age of

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[107] Ibid., pp. 14, 44-45.

[108] Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in Making, p. 37.

[109] Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose, p. 165.

[110] Ibid., pp. 96-97.

[111] Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., pp. 349-350.

twenty-two, when he joined Keshab Chandra Sen's Brāhma Samāj. His religious questioning was closely connected with a strong attraction for English culture and early revolt against the traditional Hindu social system. He expressed great admiration for the English family and way of life, and the freedom of English women during his stay in England.[112] As a young man in India he had expressed great interest in female emancipation and education, and he chose an educated girl from a Brāhma family for his wife prior to joining the Brāhma Samāj.[113]

Ananda Mohan's admiration of English society was combined with a strong concern about the degradation of his own country. His conversion to Brāhmaism was as much due to his conviction that the Brāhma Samāj was the path of regeneration for India as to his social revolt. He saw religious and political work, service of God and service of his country as but different sides of the same endeavor.[114] In 1893 he wrote in his diary

> . . . I feel an almost overpowering desire to give up all my secular work and devote myself entirely to the service of my God and my Country . . . . If it pleases God, I will work for two, and not more than three, years in the drudgery of my profession, and then entirely devote myself to the nobler work of

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[112] Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose, pp. 35-37.

[113] Ibid., pp. 12-13, 31.

[114] Sivnath Sastri, Men I have Seen (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1948), p. 59.

> my country's spiritual, political and intellectual advancement. Wilt thou Father allow it to be so?[115]

During most of his life he believed that the political and social progress of his country should be modelled on English social and political development. He admired the English constitutional heritage and insisted on constitutional procedure in the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and the Indian Association. Most of his life he identified his own political stand with the English Liberals, even campaigning for the Liberal party candidates for Parliament when he was in England in 1897.[116] It was not until he gave his presidential address at the Indian National Congress in 1898 that Ananda Mohan expressed doubt about whether British policy was beneficial to India.[117]

Sasipad Banerji

Sasipad Banerji was born in 1840 in a Kulīn Brāhmaṇ family with small landholdings and a tradition of government service in Baranagore, an industrial town which was a suburb of Calcutta. He was given an English education and studied up to the matriculation level. His career included teaching and a government job as Superintendent of Post Offices, but

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[115]Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose, p. 44.

[116]Ibid., p. 152.

[117]Ibid., app. p. xxv.

his life was dedicated to social work.[118] In 1865 he established a girls' school in his town, and in 1870 he went to England with his wife on the invitation of a Miss Carpenter who was interested in female education in India. Sasipad frequently expressed his admiration for English society and family life, and upon his return he devoted himself entirely to social work.[119] He continued his work for the girls' school, and established a boys' school, a workingmen's night school, a library, and a savings bank for workers. After the death of his first wife he married an educated widow and together they established a widows' boarding school to prepare widows for the profession of teaching.[120] He had been converted to Brāhmaism in 1865, and in 1878 he joined the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. His movement in Baranagore was one of the most successful centers of social reform outside of Calcutta.[121]

Sasipad seems to have derived his questioning of Hindu religion and social practices from his English education and later from his admiration of the English social system.

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[118]Albion Rajkumar Banerji, An Indian Pathfinder: Memoirs of Sevabrata Sasipada Banerji, 1840-1924 (Oxford: Kemp Hall Press, n.d.), pp. 15-18.

[119]Ibid., pp. 38-40.

[120]"Sasipad Banerji," Some Noted Indians of Modern Times, p. 105.

[121]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 386-7.

According to the biography by his son, his English education led him to question idolatry and the worship of many gods and goddesses. He confessed doubts to the Brāhmaṇ priest who ministered to his family, and the priest gave him a mantra with reference to worship of Brahmaṇ, the Supreme God.[122] When he married at age twenty he felt very disturbed because his wife was illiterate and could not share the new thought his own education had opened up to him. He thought that he could not be happy with a wife who was not above superstition and idolatry, and he insisted on educating her against her own opposition and the opposition of his whole family.[123] At the time it was a great social offense for a wife to even speak to her husband during the day, and even more so to receive instruction from her husband. Sasipad Banerji lived in a large joint family, and in this situation it required remarkable independence to persevere in face of opposition from his elders.[124] He also began to teach his sister-in-law, and in 1865 he started a public girls' school.[125] In the same year he went to Calcutta and heard a lecture by Keshab Chandra Sen. He decided that his own ideas on social and religious reform coincided with the program of

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[122] Albion Rajkumar Banerji, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

[123] "Sasipad Banerji," Some Noted Indians of Modern Times, pp. 100-101.

[124] Ibid., p. 100.

[125] Ibid., p. 102.

the Brāhma Samāj and was initiated in the same year. Thus, Sasipad Banerji's conversion was closely connected with social rebellion and his admiration for British values which he had first come into contact with through English education. He was convinced that God had brought British rule to India in order to spread western education and uproot superstition. He had great faith in the British social and political system and he believed that India should follow the same line of development.[126]

Bipin Chandra Pal

Bipin Chandra Pal was born in a Kāyastha family in Sylhet, at that time part of Bengal, later a part of Assam. His father was a Deputy Magistrate, but he gave up this post to go to Sylhet town so that Bipin could have an English education.[127] Bipin passed the entrance examination for Calcutta University in 1874 and his father sent him to Calcutta. Since he had no relatives in Calcutta he lived in a student dormitory. He never passed his examinations, and subsequently he taught school in Orissa, Sylhet, and in Bangalore, South India.[128] After his father's death he tried to manage the family estates, but became discouraged

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[126] Ibid., pp. 102-104.

[127] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I. pp. 94-100.

[128] Ibid., pp. 362-63, 370, 385.

with the petty illegalities necessary to extract rent from tenants and finally sold the estates and moved back to Calcutta to earn his livelihood entirely from journalism and teaching.[129] He was sub-editor of the Brahmo Public Opinion and editor of an English paper in Lahore in west India.[130] In 1905 he achieved fame as a leader of the anti-partition agitation. He had joined the Brāhma Samāj in 1876, and he sided with the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in 1878.[131] He was on the general committee of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, and he went on speech making tours as an informal missionary. In 1898 he went to England with a Unitarian scholarship to study theology at Manchester.[132]

Bipin Pal was one of the most interesting personalities in the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. The most prominent trait in his personality was a strong individualism and a resistance to authority. He himself recounts anecdotes of "wilfulness" as a child.[133] In his adult life he could not

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[129] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, Ltd., 1951), pp. 7-12.

[130] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[131] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 35.

[132] The Twenty-first Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1898, p. 17. The Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1900-1901, p. 6.

[133] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 35.

hold a job in which he was in a subordinate position for more than a year. He resigned from his teaching post in Orissa and Bangalore, and from his job with the Lahore Tribune because he would not compromise when he had disagreements with the proprietors.[134] He always stuck to his own ideas even though he was perpetually short of money, and could ill afford to lose the earlier jobs. Bipin was converted to many ideological causes during his lifetime; first the Brāhma Samāj, then a Neo-Vaiṣṇava faith and militant nationalism. But in spite of the energy with which he took up each cause, he never lost his independence of mind. While still a fervent Brāhma he criticized the Brāhmas for being sanctimonious,[135] he objected to revivalist features in Neo-Vaiṣṇava thought, and he broke with Aurobindo and other leaders of the militant nationalist movement over the issue of terrorism.[136] Bipin remarked of his own character in his autobiography, "Freedom in the sense of revolt against restraint was an inherited instinct in me . . . . I was too proud to accept the law of my life from anybody else."[137] When he converted to the Brāhma Samāj and then

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[134] Ibid., pp. 362-63, 403-04. Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II, pp. 27-28.

[135] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 296.

[136] Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1953), p. 52.

[137] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 295.

married a widow of Brāhmaṇ caste, he became involved in a lengthy conflict with his father. Here Bipin was also adamant, and he refused to compromise by conforming with the externals of Hindu orthodoxy to soothe his father's feelings.[138] The main appeal of the Brāhma Samāj was its message of liberty of individual conscience and individual judgment. He remarked in his autobiography that in his young days he never troubled himself over theological questions, and he was drawn to the Brāhma Samāj by its message of personal freedom.[139]

In the same year that Bipin was initiated into the Brāhma Samāj he also became interested in nationalism. In 1876 he attended a gymnastic class headed by Nabagopal Mitra, a member of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj known as a nationalist leader. He also attended the Hindu Melā which was devoted to development of national literature, songs, arts, and manufactures. According to Bipin, "It was here at this mela that I first came into conflict with Anglo-Indian arrogance and police aggression."[140] Bipin had refused to give up his chair to an Englishman, a row started, the police intervened, and Bipin was arrested. He was later

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[138] Ibid., pp. 379-382.

[139] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II, p. 97.

[140] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, pp. 266-267.

acquitted of charges of rioting and obstructing a public servant in discharge of his duties.[141] Shortly after Bipin joined a group of Brāhma young men who had established a society under the leadership of Sivnath Sastri. The purpose of the society was social uplift in preparation for eventual national emancipation. Bipin Pal said in his autobiography that he was attracted to Sivnath's combined emphasis on individual freedom and national emancipation. He was formally initiated into the Brāhma Samāj later that same year.[142] Thus, Bipin's budding feeling of nationalism was also a factor contributing to his conversion to Brāhmaism. In later life the struggle against foreign rule was to become his main preoccupation. At the time he joined the Brāhma Samāj he was more concerned with gaining individual freedom from the shackles of the orthodox Hindu social system, but the idea of individual freedom and national freedom were interwoven in his mind. He keenly resented the superior attitudes of Englishmen in India and his own inferior position as member of a subject people. He believed that Brāhmaism would liberate India from spiritual and social stagnation which would eventually lead to national freedom.

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[141] Ibid., pp. 266-267.

[142] Ibid., pp. 308-317.

Sivnath Sastri

Sivnath Sastri was born in 1847 in a village a few miles south of Calcutta. His family were kulīn Brāhmaṇ, and their traditional vocation was serving as priests, but his father knew English and was headmaster of a village school.[143] At the age of nine Sivnath went to live with his maternal uncle in Calcutta who edited a famous Bengali journal. In his uncle's company he met many liberal men of Calcutta including Vidyasagar, the famous Bengali social reformer who campaigned for the remarriage of widows.[144] He attended the Calcutta Sanskrit College but took the English course. He received his M.A. and law degrees, but he was never interested in the legal profession.[145] He edited his uncle's journal for a while, and served as headmaster of a school in south Calcutta until he decided to devote full time to missionary work for the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj.[146] He helped with the City College and the Brāhma Girls' School, and was also active in the Indian Association.[147] In later years he concentrated on religious work. He traveled all over India as a missionary, and served as the president of the Sādhāraṇ

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143 Sivnath Sastri, Men I Have Seen, p. 32.

144 Ibid., p. 3.

145 Ibid., p. 37.

146 Sivnath Sastri, Ātmacarit (Autobiography) (Calcutta: n.d.), p. 124.

147 Sivnath Sastri, Men I Have Seen, pp. 46-48, 54.

Brāhma Samāj.[148]

Judging from Sivnath's autobiography there were several factors involved in his conversion to Brāhmaism. His association with his uncle and Vidyasagar made him an advocate of social reform; he was against kulīn polygamy.[149] This principle involved him in conflict with his father. He had been married at the age of about twelve, but when he was eighteen his father became angry with his wife and her family. He sent Sivnath's first wife back to her parents and forced him to marry again. According to his autobiography Sivnath felt that his father was unjust to his first wife and objected to being married again, but he was too afraid of his father to disobey him.[150] This conflict brought on an acute spiritual crisis because he felt that he was guilty of polygamy. He began to pray and to visit the Brāhma Samāj. He reported that this helped him to gain independence of mind and he no longer feared his father. When his father asked him to stop going to the Brāhma Samāj he replied that he was ready to obey him in everything except his religious life. From this point on, he decided to submit only to his own conscience and not to any external force. Henceforth, he refused to participate in the ritualistic worship of family

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[148] Sivnath Sastri, Ātmacarit, pp. 155-165.

[149] Sivnath Sastri, Men I Have Seen, p. 3.

[150] Sivnath Sastri, Atmacarit, pp. 67-75.

gods and goddesses. He took his first wife to his maternal uncle's house and visited her every Saturday.[151] In 1869 he was formally initiated into Brāhmaism and he discarded his sacred thread. His father attempted to use force to make him recant, and father and son were estranged for many years.[152]

Sivnath's conversion to Brāhmaism seemed to be involved with his discovery of a new standard of morality based on his study of Sanskrit and English literature and his contact with liberal Calcutta circles which conflicted with the customary morality of his father in the village environment. According to customary Hindu morality a wife could be discarded under certain circumstances. In any case the first duty of a son was obedience to his parents. Sivnath's remarriage in obedience to his father's wishes could not have been regarded as immoral in his village. Sivnath countered with the principle that in no case should a man take a second wife while the first one is still living, and that his individual perception of the moral truth should be a guide to action over the consideration of obedience to his father. He insisted on universalistic criteria and individual judgment of morality which was completely in opposition to social norms. The only group that could

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[151] Ibid., pp. 70-74.

[152] Ibid., pp. 94-100.

support this position against the strong forces of family and social pressure was the Brāhma Samāj, and thus he was naturally drawn to be a member. Sivnath Sastri was apparently deeply affected by the spirit of individualism in western culture.[153]

Besides the urge for individual freedom of conscience Sivnath was also attracted to the Brāhma Samāj by his concern over his country's degradation. He reported at length how he refused as a college boy to remove his slippers in the presence of the English Government Inspector of Schools and the argument that followed. His maternal uncle supported him and made the case an example of English arrogance in his newspaper.[154] According to Bipin Pal, Sivnath's feeling of national degradation and the need for national uplift was an integral part of his Brāhmaism. Bipin reported that Sivnath started a young men's group as an auxiliary to the Brāhma Samāj in 1876 which "combined the religious and social idealism of the Brāhma Samāj with the political idealism of Surendranath."[155] The members of the society pledged to "put up a strenuous and uncompromising fight against image-worship and caste-domination in Hindu society . . . and

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[153]Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 309.

[154]Sivnath Sastri, Men I Have Seen, p. 32.

[155]Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 311. (The reference is to Surendranath Banerjea, the nationalist leader.)

assertion of the absolute supremacy of the individual conscience in the determination of all ethical questions and the regulation of all social relations."[156] He also pledged not to take service under the British government because foreign rule is by nature immoral, and to accept a salary from a foreign government would be immoral. But since social and religious evils in India made her as yet not fit for self-government they would abide by the laws of the foreign government for the time being, while working to advance the country toward eventual self-government. All the members of this group subsequently became Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas.[157] Sivnath Sastri admired the social and political system of England and wished India to develop along those lines, and yet expressed resentment over British rule and the arrogance of British rulers in India.

Sitanath Tattvabhushan

Sitanath Tattvabhushan was born in 1856 into a Kāyastha family in Sylhet. His original name was Datta, but he adopted the title of Tattvabhushan.[158] Sitanath went to an English medium school in the provincial town of Sylhet and briefly in Dacca. While he was in Dacca he heard a

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[156]Ibid., p. 312.

[157]Ibid., pp. 312-313.

[158]Sitanath Tattvabhushan, Autobiography (Calcutta: Brahmo Mission Press, n.d.), pp. 1-21.

lecture by Keshab Chandra Sen and was very impressed, and he later came into contact with a small Brāhma group in Sylhet. When he went to Calcutta at the age of fifteen to study for the entrance examination he and his cousin joined the Brāhma Samāj.[159] Sitanath took Brāhma ideas on female emancipation very seriously, and he married a young widow. His family was very strongly opposed to his conversion to Brāhmaism and his marriage. Sitanath passed the college entrance examination and took employment as a teacher. He was a member of the general committee of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and he directed the Theological Institute.[160] His later life was devoted to philosophical study and writing.

Sitanath was attracted to the Brāhma Samāj for several reasons. He rebelled at an early age against Hindu ritual and the ritualistic nature of social proprieties. In his autobiography he wrote of the bitter memory of the death of his mother. His mother was dying after childbirth and called for Sitanath to come to her in her hut.

> But my father would not let me go. The house was believed to be unholy, owing to the birth of the child. The day of its purification had not yet come. If I went into it, I should have to take a bath, but that could not be, as I was suffering from fever. So the dying mother's wish to have her child by her in her last moments was not fulfilled.

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[159] Ibid., pp. 34-50.

[160] Ibid., pp. 45-47, 109-115.

> I have remembered this cruel affair with deep pain and anger all my life.[161]

Sitanath also said that when he converted to Brāhmaism he had great difficulty to persuade his family that he was right to follow his conscience in this matter. His older uncle could not understand why he could not conform to social and religious norms while he was in the village although he might think differently. According to Sitanath his uncle used to admonish him with a Sanskrit couplet, "Though one may be a yogi, all-knowing and able to leap over the sea, yet he should not, even in thought, go against the popular usage." Sitanath replied that he must follow his own conscience.[162]

While Sitanath Datta was very much attracted to the individualism of western culture he was also deeply attached to his Hindu heritage. As a philosopher he tried to find a philosophical basis for Brāhmaism in the Upaniṣads and in Śaṁkara's advaita Vedānta, and thus to find a basis for religious and social reform in the Śakta-Vedānta tradition.

A summary of the facts concerning the lives of the leaders discussed above is given in Table 11.

These leaders of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj were in many ways typical members of the Bengali elite. They were

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[161] Ibid., p. 18.

[162] Ibid., p. 21.

Table 11

The Names, Caste Status, Education, Urban Exposure, Occupation, Position in the *Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj*, and Field in which Five *Brāhma* Leaders Achieved Public Recognition

Name	Caste	Education	Urban Exposure	Occupation	Position in SBS	Field of Renown
Ananda Mohan Bose	Kāyastha	M.A., Law Degree from England	Grew up in provincial town of Mymensingh, came to Calcutta at age sixteen	Lawyer	President	Education and Politics
Sasipad Banerji	Brāhmaṇ	University Entrance Exam	Grew up in Calcutta suburb	Post Office Superintendent and School Teacher	Executive Committee	Social Reform
Bipin Chandra Pal	Kāyastha	University Entrance Exam	Grew up in Sylhet town, came to Calcutta at age sixteen	School Teacher and Journalist	General Committee	Politics
Sivnath Sastri	Brāhmaṇ	B.L., M.A.	Came to Calcutta at age nine	Professor	President	Religion
Sitanath Tattvabhuskan	Kāyastha	University Entrance Exam	Grew up in Sylhet town, brief time in Dacca, came to Calcutta at age fifteen	School Teacher	General Committee	Philosophy

upper caste, English-educated and they were all exposed to the urban environments of east Bengal towns, Calcutta suburbs, or the metropolis itself, at an early age. Although landholding was in the family background of several, they themselves depended exclusively on the professions and government service for their livelihood.

All five leaders were deeply affected by their English education and attracted to western cultural values. As individuals they never considered an attempt to discard western culture and they firmly rejected compartmentalization[163] of western and traditional values in different spheres of life. Sitanath Datta's story of his argument with his uncle in which he rejected his uncle's plea to conform to Hindu social orthodoxy in Sylhet, while he might think and act differently in Calcutta, makes it clear that he regarded such a compromise as moral cowardice. The usual

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[163]The term compartmentalization to describe a form of accommodation to western impact has been used by the anthropologist, Milton Singer. According to Singer, an Indian may adjust to the intrusion of the values and institutions of western culture by a mental process of compartmentalization of his life into separate spheres in which different value systems apply. In this case some western values are accepted but in such a way that the challenge to tradition is minimized. The concept of compartmentalization is not particularly useful in analyzing religious reform leaders like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas who wished to create a unified value system. See Milton Singer, "On the Modernization of Cultural Tradition," Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn, eds., Structure and Change in Indian Society (Chicago: Adeline Publishing Co., 1968).

form which a compromise between western and Hindu values took was a division between the norms a man followed in his professional life where he might break caste rules, and the norms he followed at home where he would observe respect for his elders, orthodox rules regarding food, and accept the *pardā* of women. These men, on the other hand, were determined that their new moral values, their belief in individual moral choice and female emancipation should be expressed at home even if it meant challenging the authority of family and caste leaders. It was common at that time for men of the Bengali elite to receive English education and work in the professional world while the womenfolk remained uneducated and completely unaware of the new world in which their sons and husbands were moving. Perhaps many members of the Bengali elite compromised with this situation without strain, but these *Brāhma* leaders felt that the gap between men and women was unbearable and they challenged the tradition which kept women backward. All five supported female emancipation and either married educated women or educated their wives after marriage; Bipin Pal, Sasipad Banerji, and Sitanath Datta all married widows. As individuals these leaders of the *Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj* could not compartmentalize; they felt compelled to choose between contradictory values.

They did not hold a unanimous view of what the new Indian culture should be, although they agreed that religious reform was essential to the creation of new values.

Nemai Sadhan Bose in Indian Awakening and Bengal had voiced a common misconception when he wrote that the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were totally oriented toward adoption of western culture.[164] They were certainly a group within Bengali society who were most sympathetic to western values, but they actually wavered between advocacy of total westernization and the idea of developing a synthesis between the values of the West and their own culture. Sasipad Banerji stands out among the five as the only one who advocated complete adoption of western values. He admired and wished to emulate the English family, the English spirit of individualism, the English social and political system, and saw English rule as a great blessing for India. The attitudes of the others were more complex. Sitanath admired western values but he did not accept the western criticism of Vedānta as an immoral philosophy detrimental to progress. He believed if Brāhmaism were to become a reforming influence in Indian life it must be based on the Indian religious and philosophical tradition. He wanted an integration of the idea of social activism as a religious duty, which was introduced from the West, within the Hindu tradition. In the nineties, Bipin Pal, who had earlier been close to espousing complete westernization, also began to think about integrating individualistic values and social

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[164] Nemai Sadhan Bose, The Indian Awakening and Bengal (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960).

activist ethics within the Hindu tradition when he became attracted to Neo-Vaiṣṇava thought. The small circle of Brāhma intellectuals wavered between advocacy of westernization and seeking an indigenous basis for social change. However, one of the difficulties the Brāhmas encountered was the failure of their program to convincingly integrate Hindu tradition in its framework of religious and social reform, although several members made efforts toward constructing a synthesis.

Several of our subjects were very sensitive to British arrogance and resentful of foreign rule. Bipin Pal, Sivnath Sastri, and Ananda Mohan Bose were deeply concerned about the social, political and economic backwardness of their country. Bipin Pal and Sivnath Sastri in particular showed a resentment of their inferior position as members of a subject people, and a strong tendency to oppose British rule. Their sentiments of opposition and their desire for self-respect received some outlet in their conversion to the reform program of the Brāhma Samāj. Sivnath Sastri decided that social and religious reform were prerequisites of political development and his work in the Brāhma Samāj was thus furthering the cause of eventual independence. He, Bipin Pal and Ananda Mohan Bose supported the Brāhma Samāj in the belief that it would remove the backward customs which were holding the country back and inculcate individual initiative and social activism necessary for progress. The

Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj seemed to offer a road toward recovery of individual and group self-respect, which was challenged by British criticism, and the very fact of being a subject people. Most of the Brāhmas accepted the seeming contradiction of a degree of opposition to British rule and admiration of western culture. However, their desire to emulate British political and social system tempered the militancy of their opposition to British rule.

Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and Politics

Between 1878 and 1905 the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were generally liberal or moderate nationalists. That is to say they believed in the good faith of the British and that Britain would eventually grant India independence. In the meantime they believed that political development should follow the lines of constitutional agitation for Indian participation in the governing process and against injustices of the British Indian government.

This point of view was never officially proclaimed by the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj which regarded itself as a non-political organization. However, the liberal nationalist viewpoint was vigorously advocated by the official periodical organ of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, the Brahmo Public Opinion, and in other periodicals controlled or edited by Sādhāraṇ Brāhma leaders. The Brahmo Public Opinion which was published between 1878 and 1883 cast itself in the role of a loyal

opposition to the British Indian government. Furthermore, it consistently supported the Indian Association. A typical extract in opposition to the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 which sought to control seditious writings in the vernacular:

> British superemacy in the East has, in our minds, been so thoroughly associated with the cause of true progress and enlightenment that it was not without a blush and a pang that we read the provisions of a law which, for all practical purposes, has put a gag into the mouth of the Vernacular Press, and has dealt a heavy blow at the cause of native progress and of good Government in India. We ask was there any justification of a measure of this kind? We disclaim all sympathy with seditious writings, we think seditious writings ought to be put down with a high hand, and the majesty of British supremacy vindicated and the cause of good Government upheld in India under all circumstances. But we are deliberately of the opinion that the vast majority of the extracts upon which this measure of law is made to rest are not seditious . . . .[165]

The Brahmo Public Opinion also expressed its objection to the British northwest frontier policy, and the financial burden imposed on India by the Afghanistan War. Other articles chided Britain for not taking measures to help the economic development of India.[166]

The Brahmo Public Opinion was discontinued as official organ because its leader thought that the outspoken political articles were unsuitable for the official organ of

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[165] Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 2 (March 28, 1878), pp. 11-12.

[166] Ibid., Vol. I, No. 37 (December 12, 1878), pp. 413-414; Vol. II, No. 38 (December 25, 1879), pp. 449-450.

a religious society.[167] However, the journal was continued under the private management of Bhuban Mohan Das[168] as the Bengal Public Opinion, and it merged with Surendranath Banerjea's Bengalee in 1885. It continued to express the same liberal nationalist viewpoint.[169] Another group of prominent Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas edited a vernacular weekly called the Sañjībanī. The proprietor and editor was Krishna Kumar Mitra. He was assisted by Kali Sankar Sukul, Heramba Chandra Maitra and Dwarkanath Ganguly, all prominent in the central leadership of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj.[170] The Sañjībanī prior to 1900 supported British rule, but vigorously exposed injustices. In the years 1883 and 1884 the Sañjībanī campaigned against the government retreat on the Ilbert Bill.[171] In 1886 the Sañjībanī sent Dwarkanath Ganguly to tour the tea gardens of Assam to report on conditions of coolie labor. His reports of European planters reducing laborers to semi-slavery caused widespread indignation.[172]

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[167] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, pp. 423-429.

[168] Brother of Durga Mohan Das, and father of the famous nationalist leader, Chittaranjan Das.

[169] Prithwis Chandra Roy, Life and Times of C. R. Das (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 16.

[170] Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., pp. 394-395.

[171] Ibid., p. 396.

[172] Ibid.

Many of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas involved in the Bengal Public Opinion and the Sañjībanī were close associates of Surendranath Banerjea in the Indian Association. In 1875 Ananda Mohan Bose had formed a students association at the Presidency College in Calcutta. Surendranath Banerjea and Sivnath Sastri joined him in delivering patriotic lectures to the students.[173] Then, in 1876 Ananda Mohan Bose helped Surendranath Banerjea found the Indian Association, and served as its Secretary from 1876 to 1884, and President from 1896 to 1906. He played a prominent role in the agitation against the Indian Civil Service regulations of 1877 and the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. He participated in the national conference called by Surendranath in 1883 and the Indian National Congress when it was organized in 1885. In 1898 he was President of the Indian National Congress.[174]

There were several other Sādhāraṇ Brāhma leaders who were close associates of Surendranath Banerjea and prominent in the Indian Association. The list includes Krishna Kumar Mitra, Dwarkanath Ganguly, Kali Sankar Sukul, Nagendranth Chatterji, Sivnath Sastri, and Tarapada

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[173]Surendranath Banerjea, op. cit., p. 36.

[174]Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., pp. 352-354. Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ānando Mohan Bose, pp. 83-85.

Banerjea, all of whom were officers, missionaries, or members of the executive committee of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj.[175] Dwarkanath Ganguly and Krishna Kumar Mitra were appointed joint assistant secretaries when the Indian Association was established in 1876.[176] Krishna Kumar Mitra, Kali Sankar Sukul and Nagendranath Chatterji accompanied Surendranath on his tour of upper India to inspire national opposition to the new civil service regulations in 1877.[177] Tarapada Banerji and Sivnath Sastri helped to collect funds for the Indian Association.[178] In 1881 and 1882 Kali Sankar Sukul, K. K. Mitra and Dwarkanath Ganguly toured the countryside of Bengal to affiliate existing political organizations with the Indian Association.[179] Dwarkanath Ganguly's investigation of coolie labor on the tea plantations in Assam was an Indian Association assignment.[180]

According to Sivnath Sastri, Surendranath Banerjea

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[175] Nineteenth and Twentieth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1896-1897, p. 5. Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1900-1901, p.1.

[176] Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., p. 394.

[177] Surendranath Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 41, 89.

[178] Sivnath Sastri, Men I Have Seen, p. 46. Nirmal Sinha, op. cit., p. 333.

[179] Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.220.

[180] Brajendranath Bandhopadhyay, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

and a group of Brāhmas met regularly at the house of Ananda Mohan Bose before the organization of the Indian Association.

> Ananda Mohan's house became something of a club where all advanced thinkers met to discuss their ideas. At this time two subjects occupied our foremost attention. First, the necessity of doing something for the student population, secondly, the need for a political association for the middle classes of the country.[181]

These Brāhmas cooperated with Surendranath in the foundation of the Indian Association in 1876 and all of them became Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas in 1878.[182] It has been mentioned that the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of the Indian Association when it was first organized were Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas.

The organization of the Brāhma Samāj and the Indian Association were closely related. The Brāhma Samāj had made a great impression by forming a viable organization with branches all over Bengal. Brāhma attempts to form an all-India reform organization were also inspiring.[183] The Brāhma organization had brought together a group of men in Calcutta who were of similar political opinion. The Brāhmas who met with Surendranath in 1875 later became

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[181]Sivnath Sastri, Men I Have Seen, p. 46.

[182]Ibid.

[183]Ibid.

leaders of the Indian Association and of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. They were for the most part successful members of the Bengali elite who were impatient with zamindār control in the old political organization, the British Indian Association. They were nationalists concerned with Indian participation in government. The organization of the Brāhma Samāj was what brought these men of similar ideas together. They had also gained organizational experience in the Brāhma Samāj, and they were used to working together. Surendranath was in a way a member of this group though he never joined the Brāhma Samāj. These Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas provided a core of leadership which was very important to the initial organization of the Indian Association.

The members of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj did not see their religious and political beliefs as unconnected. Their Brāhma theology included a concept of the progress of man and the religious duty of man to work for the betterment of his society. They held a belief in individual freedom and the equality of man under God. In religion, the belief in individual freedom took the form of the doctrine of the individual conscience. The belief in equality of man under God took the form of denial of mediators between man and God because all men are equally capable of a direct relationship with God, and the concept of democratic church government. In politics, the Brāhma

concern with individual freedom took the form of admiration of the British tradition of civil rights. The _Brāhmas_ advocated eventual political constitutional democracy for India along the same lines as their own church government.[184] On the other hand, the _Sādhāraṇ_ _Brāhmas_ were acutely aware that Indian society had little tradition of individual freedom, equality or democracy. They tended to see the British presence as necessary to inculcate these values, and they did not advocate independence in the near future in this period.[185]

On the contrary, the members of the _Ādi_ _Brāhma_ _Samāj_ were early supporters of independence as a political goal. The Hindu _Melā_, started by Nabagopal Mitra, and supported by Rajnarain Bose and the Tagores was dedicated to the growth and development of Bengali and Indian culture. The Hindu _Melā_, which met annually between 1867 and 1880, included national songs in the vernacular, display of indigenous crafts and industrial products and physical exercises. The idea was to encourage the development of self-reliance.[186] Nabagopal Mitra himself advocated an all-India nationalism

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[184] Bipin Pal, _The Brahmo Samaj and Swaraj_, p. 66.

[185] _Brahmo Public Opinion_, Vol. I, No. 2 (March 28, 1878), pp. 11-12.

[186] Nirmal Sinha, _op_. _cit_., pp. 281-282.

based on Hindu identity.[187] Rajnarain Bose supported the revival and growth of Bengali cultures. It is rather unclear whether Rajnarain stood for Bengali nationalism, all-India nationalism, or Hindu nationalism, or thought that all three could be amalgamated. The younger Tagores, who were the most important members of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj in the late nineteenth century, were definitely dedicated to an all-India nationalism. The fifth son of Debendranath, Jyotirindranath Tagore, established a secret society in 1877 for propagating Indian independence.[188] This society held secret meetings and tried to establish a match factory and a power loom to help economic regeneration. Rabindranath Tagore also participated in this secret society.[189] Thus, important members of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj were already sympathetic to the idea of independence in the late nineteenth century. Their idea, that social change need not have a western model, made them less apprehensive about the development of India without the presence of the British than their contemporaries in the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj.

Rabindranath Tagore of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj took an

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[187] Ibid., p. 281.

[188] Ibid., p. 381.

[189] Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences, pp. 141-142.

active part in the anti-partition agitation. He participated in the National Council of Education, wrote patriotic songs, and spoke in favor of the svadeśī (native land) movement.[190] In August, 1905, he gave a speech in the Town Hall of Calcutta entitled "Situation and Solution." In this speech he proposed that the concept of svadeśī should be extended to include the formation of a parallel government in the countryside with two leaders, one Hindu and one Muslim, to work for rural reconstruction independently of the British.[191] However, Rabindranath did not anticipate an inevitable clash with the British, nor did he support a complete boycott of the administration like the passive resistors. He wanted young people to concentrate their energies on constructive work in the villages rather than agitation in the cities and towns.[192] He insisted that he supported constructive svadeśī that would build up India rather than boycott against the foreigner. He attempted to dissuade students from boycotting the Calcutta University since he did not see any useful purpose in their losing the chance for education.[193] Rabindranath's support of construc-

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[190]Radha Kumud Mookerji, "Tagore as a Political Thinker," Ramananda Tagore, ed., The Golden Book of Tagore (Calcutta: The Golden Book Committee, 1931), pp. 170-171.

[191]Sudhir Sen, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

[192]Ibid., p. 24.

[193]Mahalanabis, "Rabindranath Tagore the Humanist," Ramananda Tagore, ed., The Golden Book of Tagore, p. 303.

tive svadeśī was not a new political idea for him. Unlike the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas he had never had much faith in the liberal nationalist politics of the Indian Association and the Indian National Congress.[194] In the nineties while managing his father's estates he had evolved some ideas about rural reconstruction. He felt that rural reconstruction for the building of an independent nation would be more fruitful than political agitation against the British.[195] The support of constructive svadeśī was a natural outgrowth of his earlier thought. But when the nationalist movement began to turn to terrorism, and Muslim-Hindu tensions increased, Rabindranath gradually withdrew his support. He was concerned about the growth of Hindu revivalism.[196]

In the late nineteenth century the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas had given support to British rule because they believed that the British had been responsible for the introduction of the progressive and the modern in Indian life. British rule had made it possible for them to break away from the bondage of the orthodox social system. They saw British

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[194]"Hātē Kalamē" (pen in hand) Bhāratī, Vol. VIII (1884), pp. 228-241. (In this article Rabindranath wrote that the Indian Association tactic of praying for good treatment from the rulers has failed, what is required is effort on our own to help our countrymen and build up the country.)

[195]Sudhir Sen, op. cit., p. 6.

[196]Sumit Sarkar, "Trends in Bengal's Swadeshi Movement: Part I," Bengal Past and Present, Vol. LXXXIV, Pt. I (Jan. July, 1965), pp. 11-12.

rule as championing individual freedom against the reactionary forces of Hindu orthodoxy. Furthermore, in spite of their criticism of certain British policies they believed that the direction of British rule was toward liberalization and greater Indian participation in government. Such things as the Vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act did not undermine their faith in British intentions.

However, beginning about 1895 there was a change of attitude toward British rule. There were several factors involved, one of which was the trend of British policy at the end of the century. Ananda Mohan Bose's speech as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1898 underlined the aspects of British policy which disturbed the moderate nationalists. The speech praised Gladstone, recently dead, and mentioned the benefits of British rule. But Ananda Mohan Bose went on to say that British policy shows an alarming reactionary trend where "elementary rights of citizenship previously granted, are being taken away."[197] He referred to the case of the Natu brothers in Poona being imprisoned without trial, exclusion of Indians from highest appointments to the Education Commission, the proposal of the Calcutta Municipal Bill under consideration to eliminate the numerical superiority of elected representatives on the

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[197]Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose, app., p. xxv.

municipal legislative council, and the imposition of the entire financial burden of the Afghan war on India. He proclaimed the crucial question, "whether Backward or Forward is to be inscribed as the motto on the banner of England in its future administration of this great country."[198] This speech shows that Ananda Mohan Bose was already experiencing doubts about his moderate nationalist faith. British policy during the administration of Lord Curzon was hardly reassuring to the Bengali elite. The Calcutta Municipal Bill, passed in 1899, threatened the power of the Bengali elite in the Muncipal Council where they had dominated elected positions.[199] In 1904 a Universities Act was passed which the British Indian government said would improve the quality of education. The Bengali elite interpreted this government measure as an attempt to discourage higher education by tightening standards for private colleges and demanding minimum fees, and to restrict their influence in education by increasing official control of colleges.[200] Moderate nationalists, like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, had previously envisioned a partnership of the educated elite (themselves) with the British for the better-

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[198] Ibid., p. xxv.

[199] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Growth of Nationalism in India, 1857-1905, pp. 124-125.

[200] Bengalee, February 25, 1904.

ment of India. The policy of the British made them suspicious that the British were not aiming at gradual extension of political rights, nor were the British willing to give the elite a significant role in the development of the new India.[201]

In 1905 when Lord Curzon proclaimed the partition of the province of Bengal, the Bengali elite were greatly perturbed. Bengali political leaders argued that this British move was calculated to discourage the nationalist movement in Bengal and to divide the Muslims from the movement since the new province of east Bengal and Assam had a Muslim majority.[202] Bengali elite culture centered on Calcutta, its suburbs and the provincial towns as has been pointed out in Chapter Two. Partition threatened their culture and their elite status. The first reaction to the announcement of partition was a meeting of protest in Calcutta and petitions to Parliament.[203] Later, a <u>svadeśī</u> movement developed to boycott British goods and buy Indian goods. There were several violent clashes with the police,

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[201]The reaction of the Bengali elite toward government measures during the administration of Lord Curzon will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

[202]<u>Bengalee</u>, October 28, 1905.

[203]Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, <u>India's Fight for Freedom: or The Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906</u> (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhay, 1958), p. 41.

and in 1908 an underground terrorist movement began.[204]

In the era of the anti-partition agitation the Bengali elite adopted four political positions. The _constitutional moderates_ clung to their moderate nationalist creed of the nineteenth century, and relied on petitioning, resolutions, and the press to persuade the British of their errors. The second group of _constructive svadeśī supporters_ advocated a more active policy of boycott of British goods, encouragement of Indian industries, and the construction of an independent, national system of education. They advocated independent self-development without desiring a clash with the British. The third group, the _passive resistors_ adhered to the concept of extended boycott to include boycott of the total government apparatus and contemplated an inevitable clash with British power. The fourth group, the _terrorists_, advocated terrorism as a prelude and a preparation to revolution.[205] The first group were the moderates, and the other three represented different degrees of militancy.

In the nineteenth century the _Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas_, who were politically active, were consistently constitutional moderates. Men like Sasipad Banerji, who clung to their

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[204] Sumit Sarkar, _op_. _cit_., pp. 11-12.

[205] For this fourfold classification see _ibid_., pp. 11-12.

faith that westernization was the answer for India, and British rule was beneficial, remained constitutional moderates or were inactive during the anti-partition agitation. However, a significant group of Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas switched from the constitutional moderate position and became constructive svadeśī supporters. Only a very few adopted the more radical position of passive resistance but none became terrorists.

Since Brāhmas did not play a part in terrorism writers of the nationalist school have given the impression that the Brāhmas were unsympathetic to the anti-partition agitation.[206] Actually, such Brāhmas as Krishna Kumar Mitra, Ananda Mohan Bose, and many others played a prominent part in the anti-partition agitation.

The constructive svadeśī supporters included Ananda Mohan Bose who had long been prominent as a moderate nationalist. When he heard of the partition he declared in an open letter:

> Let those among us who wish to do so, proceed with agitation in England, against the already decided question of the partition of Bengal, though I for one--I may be mistaken--do not believe that any good will result from it in the existing state of affairs. The Conservatives are past praying for, and the Liberals, when they come hereafter into power . . . will probably plead the logic of "accomplished fact," over an administrative question like this, as they

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[206] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Growth of Nationalism in India, 1857-1905, pp. 119-120.

have done before.[207]

Ananda Mohan Bose was very ill at the time of the partition but he was brought in a wheel chair to attend a great meeting to lay the foundation of a proposed Federation Hall to symbolize undying Bengali unity. In this last address, which was read for him, he declared:

> Whereas the Government has thought fit to effectuate the Partition of Bengal in spite of the universal protest of the Bengali nation, we hereby pledge and proclaim that we as a people shall do everything in our power to counter the evil effects of the dismemberment of our province.[208]

Krishna Kumar Mitra, who had been an assistant secretary of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, editor of the Sañjībanī, and a supporter of the Indian Association, also played a role in the anti-partition agitation. In July, 1905, the Sañjībanī in an editorial warned the British government that the proposed partition would meet with great resistance from the Bengali people, and published a pledge to use only indigenous goods.[209] Krishna Kumar Mitra attended several protest conferences and rallies in Calcutta in the summer of 1905.[210] After the government issued the Carlyle

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[207] Hem Chandra Sarkar, A Life of Ananda Mohan Bose, p. 178.

[208] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 79.

[209] Sañjībanī, July 13, 1905.

[210] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 77.

Circular which announced sanctions against students participating in protest meetings, Krishna Kumar became the Treasurer of a newly formed organization called the Anti-Circular Society.[211] In April, 1906 Krishna Kumar Mitra attended the Bengal Provincial Congress in Barissal. While he was walking in the procession preceding the Conference the police assaulted members of the Anti-Circular Society. The scene has been described by Bipin Chandra Pal with dramatic flair:

> . . . when the police charged a peaceful procession of delegates to the Bengal provincial conference . . . and were breaking some heads . . . Krishna Kumar rushed in between the unarmed and helpless delegates and their assailants, repelled an assaulting constable with his umbrella, dragged him to the Superintendent of Police . . . and literally ordered that officer to stop these illegal excesses.[212]

In spite of this spirited reaction to police attack Krishna Kumar Mitra was neither an Extremist nor a revolutionary. He was always a close colleague of Surendranath. His newspaper, the <u>Sañjībanī</u>, consistently supported <u>svadeśī</u> but did not advocate that it should be extended to a general boycott of the government.[213] Nevertheless, he was a popular figure in the partition resistance movement. On December 8, 1908 he was deported. According to Surendranath Banerjea,

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[211] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 93.

[212] Bipin Chandra Pal, <u>Character Sketches</u>, pp. 240-241.

[213] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 182.

> In his case deportation was the unkindest cut of all; for he had always been . . . a thorough-going opponent of revolutionary movements.[214]

Heramba Chandra Maitra, a member of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Executive Committee,[215] was also an enthusiastic supporter of svadeśī and national education. At the Indian National Congress held in December, 1905 in Banaras, Heramba Chandra Maitra moved a resolution protesting against the British policy of officialising and controlling education.[216] Most of the constructive svadeśī supporters among the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were active in the national education movement. This was natural for the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas had always been active in educational endeavors. Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas active in the national education movement included Pran Krishna Acharji, P. K. Ray, and Nil Ratan Sarkar who had been Secretary, President, and Assistant Secretary of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, respectively.[217] Prafulla Chandra Roy and Ramananda Chatterjee who had been members of the executive committee of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, and Brajendranath Seal who had been a member of the general com-

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[214] Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in Making, p. 88.

[215] Eighteenth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1895, p. 5.

[216] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 126.

[217] Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. II, pp. 212, 239, 244.

mittee also participated.[218] Pran Krishna Acharji attended the first education conference which organized the National Council of Education. He also made several speeches in support of svadeśī policy.[219] P. K. Roy also participated in the National Council of Education and the organization of a national college. In 1906 he helped to set the logic question for the entrance examination.[220] Nil Ratan Sarkar attended the first Educational Conference and he was the secretary of the provisional education committee, and later of the ways and means committee of the National Council of Education. He wrote the chemistry question for the entrance examination.[221] Prafulla Chandra Roy did not leave his position as professor of chemistry at the Presidency College to join the new national college, but he was sympathetic and helped to set the chemistry question.[222] Ramananda Chatterjee

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[218] Eighteenth Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1895, p. 5. Twenty-first Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1898, p. 17.

[219] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement, 1905-1910 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1957), p. 37. Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 77.

[220] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement, 1905-1910, p. 137.

[221] Ibid., pp. 35, 43-44, 137.

[222] H. L. Roy, "Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy and National Education," Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy: Birth Centenary (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1962), p. 210.

and Brajendranath Seal served on committees forming educational policy of the National Council of Education.[223]

This group of nine Brāhmas took an active role in the svadeśī movement and the movement for national education. Many of those participating were prominent professors. These men were never militant, nor did they advocate complete boycott of the British government or techniques of confrontation. However, there was another small group of Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas who took a more militant political stand. The most famous member of this group was Bipin Chandra Pal who advocated passive resistance. Bipin Pal was a member of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, but he also joined the Neo-Vaiṣṇava sect led by Bijoy Krishna Goswami. His close friend, Sundarimohan Das, a member of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, was also converted to Goswami's sect. They were on close terms with two friends from Barisal, Aswini Kumar Datta and Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, both of whom had been associated with the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in the eighties, and were converted by Bijoy Krishna Goswami in the nineties. These four men retained close ties in the nationalist movement, and generally adopted a more militant stance than the other Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas in the nationalist movement. Their activities will be discussed in detail in the following chapter on Neo-

[223]Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement, 1905-1910, pp. 37, 143.

Vaiṣṇavism.

The vacillation of the Brāhmas between loyal opposition to the British and a more militant political stand reflected the complexity of their attitudes toward western culture. They had been deeply affected by western ideas and they felt the challenge of British political and economic superiority. They attempted to incorporate western ideas of social change and progress, individual initiative and social activism in the Brāhma religious faith with the hope of inculcating these values within the consciousness of the Bengali elite. In reality they hoped to eventually oppose the British by adopting British values. They had made some attempt to find an alternative base for the new religion in the Upaniṣads, but they remained convinced that social progress and individual initiative were ideas derived from western culture. They did not successfully integrate western values into a Hindu cultural context and as a result they retained a great deal of feeling of dependence on the British.

In the eighties and nineties the politically active Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were generally active in the established political groups, the Indian Association, and the Indian National Congress, which accepted the idea that British rule was beneficial, and a program of gradual progress emulating the British political system. The attempt of some Brāhmas to base their religious and social reform on the Upaniṣads

was not developed fully enough to give the Brāhmas faith in the capability of their own society to progress without western aid. They could never be completely sure that the Bengali elite or the Indian elite as a whole was capable of progressive leadership without British help, or that the English-educated elite could withstand pressures from orthodox society if the British should leave. Their religious and social reform ideas thus inclined them to view British rule favorably and to trust that the British intended to encourage democracy and eventual political freedom for India. It was only after Curzon's administration showed an unmistakable tendency to curtail the political participation of the Bengali elite and showed complete insensitivity to moderate methods of protest, that some Brāhmas adopted the idea of constructive svadeśī political agitation. The political attitudes of militant opposition to British rule which emerged in the eighties and nineties was formulated by other groups who were not closely associated with the Indian Association or Congress or the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. Many of these men were former members of the Brāhma Samāj who had moved on into other groups who tried to synthesize Brāhma concepts of progress and social activism as a religious duty with the Hindu Vaiṣṇava or Śakta-Vedānta heritage.

CHAPTER IV

Neo-Vaisnava Thought

Religious reform movements in Bengal, other than the Brāhma Samāj, fell into two groups corresponding to the two religious traditions, the Śakta and the Vaiṣṇava. The majority of the members of the upper castes were Śaktas but a small minority adhered to the Vaiṣṇava cult. Moreover, the cults were not exclusive and the Śakta religious outlook did not exclude the Vaiṣṇava scriptures, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legends. In the late nineteenth century there were several significant attempts by members of the Bengali elite to reinterpret the Vaiṣṇava faith. Bankim Chandra Chatterji and a group of disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswamī were the most important Neo-Vaiṣṇava thinkers in the late nineteenth century in Bengal.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji

Bankim Chandra Chatterji is primarily known as a great Bengali novelist, but he was also a prominent religious thinker. He was born in 1838 near Calcutta in a Kulīn Brāhmaṇ family of the highest caste. When Bankim Chandra was growing up his father served in the civil service as Deputy Collector at Midnapore.[1] Bankim Chandra attended an

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[1]Jayanta Kumar Das Gupta, A Critical Study of the Life and Novels of Bankim Chandra (Calcutta: The Calcutta University, 1937), p. 13.

English school and a Sanskrit school where he studied the six systems of Hindu philosophy. He attended Hooghly college, and in 1857 he entered Presidency college of the recently organized University of Calcutta where he was one of the first two students to receive a B.A. degree from the University of Calcutta in 1858.[2]

In the same year he was appointed Deputy Collector and Deputy Magistrate in Jessore in east Bengal. His subsequent official career included thirty-three years of government service in fifteen districts of the Bengal presidency. In Khulna where he served as a Deputy Magistrate between 1860 and 1863 he came into prominence for suppression of river dacoits and for the measures he adopted in dealing with European indigo planters.[3] He died three years after his retirement in 1894.

Bankim Chandra began his literary career in English but he later switched to writing in Bengali. When his first Bengali novel, Durgeśnandinī, was published in 1865, he achieved immediate recognition.[4] In 1869 while Bankim Chandra was serving in Berhampore he became part of an important literary circle of Bengali writers. His literary journal

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[2] Ibid., p. 15.

[3] C. E. Buckland, Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors (Calcutta: Kedar Nath Bose, 1902), Vol. II, pp. 1077-1078.

[4] Das Gupta, op. cit., pp. 20-23.

Baṅgadarśan which promoted the development of Bengali language, literature and literary criticism, and published some of his most famous novels, was founded in 1872.[5] Bankim Chandra Chatterji was considered the first major novelist in Bengali. He regarded the promotion of Bengali literature as his principal life work. He was a Fellow of the University of Calcutta, and advocated that the Bengali language should be included as a subject for examination. After retirement he was elected president of the literary section of a society to supplement university education.[6] Although his major preoccupation was the development of Bengali fiction, he wrote many essays on political and religious subjects. His two major works on religion were Kṛṣṇacaritra (The Biography of Krishna), written in 1886, and Dharmatattva (Principles of Religion) written in 1888.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji was a member of the Bengali elite who attained English education and professional employment. Although his background was not unlike his contemporaries of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, his reactions to foreign influences were rather different. Unlike the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma leaders discussed in the previous chapter, the influence of English education did not lead him to personally rebel against the norms of traditional upper caste Bengali

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[5] Ibid., p. 25.

[6] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

society. There is no indication that his personal life was anything other than orthodox. He accepted an orthodox arranged marriage.[7] His novels did not champion a broad program of social reform in the manner envisioned by the Brāhmas, although he did challenge certain social evils. In the Baṅgadarśan he condemned Kulīn polygamy, but in the novel Biṣabṛkṣa (Poison Tree) he seems to have taken a stand against widow remarriage.[8] He took the view that widow remarriage might undermine the foundations of Hindu society.

Nevertheless, Bankim Chandra was as profoundly disturbed by his exposure to English ideas and values as were his contemporaries in the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. He was very much affected by the derogatory opinion of the Bengali character held by the British. Bankim Chandra himself wrote of the character of the English-educated Bengali bābu:

> Who is a Christian to the missionaries, a Brahmo to Kesabchandra, a Hindu to his father, and an atheist to Brahman beggars, he is a bābu. Who takes water at home, liquor in his friend's house, a tongue lashing in the prostitute's quarters, and a collaring at his Master Sahib's house, he is a bābu. Who despises the use of oil at bath time, his own fingers at meal time, and his mother language at conversation time; he is a bābu.[9]

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[7]Jogesh Chandra Bagal, "Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay: Life Sketch," Jogesh Chandra Bagal, ed., Baṅkim Racanābalī (Bankim Anthology), 3 vols. (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1962, 1969), Vol. III, p. 4.

[8]Das Gupta, op. cit., pp. 46-47, 96-97.

[9]Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. II, p. 12, as translated by Rachel Van M. Baumer, Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the Bengali Renaissance (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1964), p. 82.

This view of the educated Bengali is almost precisely the same as the British belief that the Bengali elite were characterized by cunning, deceitfulness, and above all, a lack of manly courage.[10] As a student and then a member of the government civil service Bankim Chandra Chatterji had many contacts with the British. His long association with the British was not entirely without bitterness. A biography written by his nephew mentions that when the revolt of 1857 broke out Bankim Chandra told one of his teachers at Presidency College that he would have thrown all his books into the Ganges if he had thought there was any real possibility that British rule would be overthrown.[11] There was also some indication of friction with the British in his official work. When he was employed in the Secretariat his superior, who desired promotion, wanted Bankim Chandra to remain after hours to work with him. When Bankim Chandra refused because

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[10]According to a handbook for British administrators: "The physical organization of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy . . . . His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak ever to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance, but its suppleness and tact move children of sterner climates to admiration not unmingled with contempt." John Strachey, India: Its Administration and Progress (London, 1888), pp. 411-412, as quoted by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, The Modernity of Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 164-165.

[11]Saciscandra Cattopadhyay, Baṅkim Jībanī [Life of Bankim] (Calcutta, 1911), pp. 105-106.

he felt that there was little chance of his extra labors receiving recognition since he was not an Englishman, he was transferred. In his new position another English official was piqued because Bankim Chandra did not salute him and had him transferred to an outlying district in Orissa.[12] Bankim Chandra seems to have been acutely aware of his inferior position. The British demand for servility from their Bengali subordinates coupled with their derision of the weakness of the Bengali character must have made it difficult for a proud man to maintain his personal sense of dignity in thirty-three years of government service. His attitude to the British was ambiguous, because he recognized the evils of British rule and yet admired the British character. His portrayal of British character in the novel Candraśekhar (1875) shows that he admired certain British characteristics such as bravery and dedication to duty.[13] Other novels indicate that he felt keenly the shame of being a member of a conquered people. The derogatory opinion held by the British of the physical and moral courage of the Bengali was profoundly disturbing to his personal pride and nationalistic feelings. Many of his novels revolve around the theme

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[12]Aurobindo Ghosh, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1894, 1964), p.16.

[13]See Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Chandra Shekhar, trans., Manmatha Nath Ray Chowdhury (London: Luzac and Co., 1904).

of moral courage or the lack of it, and a large number of his novels also deal with wars for independence from foreign rule.[14] Bankim Chandra felt that the stagnation of Bengali civilization was due to a defect in moral character in his generation. While the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas saw social institutions as the cause of Indian backwardness, Bankim Chandra believed that it was due to lack of self-confidence and moral courage. He desired moral regeneration rather than social regeneration.[15]

Bankim Chandra's Program for the Regeneration of India

Bankim Chandra Chatterji did not believe that social reform was the answer to the problems of the individual or the backwardness of his country. He believed that society grows like an organism, and ideas and institutions cannot be easily introduced from another culture. He feared that the social reformers might tear down Hindu social institutions without being able to replace them by western institutions.

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[14]These novels include Candraśekhar (1875) which deals with the British takeover of Bengal; Rājsiṁha (1882), which is about the Rajput defiance of Aurangzeb; Sītārām (1887), the story of a Hindu zamindār who revolted against Muslim power; Mṛṇālini (1869) which tells of a Hindu attempt to regain political power in times of Muslim conquest undermined by the cooperation of other Hindus with the Muslims; Ānandamaṭh (1882), about a sannyāsin revolt against Muslim power.

[15]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Kṛṣṇacaritra (Biography of Krishna) (Calcutta, 1886, 1914), p. 160.

In reply to attacks made by the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas on the institution of the joint family he wrote:

> You are tearing asunder the only bond of social union in a society which has yet to learn the first lessons in the art of cooperation. Or do you, after all, in spite of your petitionings and moralizings and the incessant outpourings of your newspaper press, really suppose that the "village municipality" will, as a school of co-operation, supersede the antiquated joint family? . . . where is our new code of morality? Where is the public opinion to enforce its rules?[16]

Bankim Chandra's opposition to social reform did not mean that he opposed change. He recognized the stagnation of Indian politics and Indian intellectual life, economic distress, and the need for change.[17] However, he felt that the social reform approach of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas was artificial. In his book on the life of Kṛṣṇa written in 1886, he clearly indicated that he thought religious regeneration rather than social reform was the key to Indian development. He pictured the life of Kṛṣṇa as dedicated to religious regeneration and the creation of a righteous kingdom (dharmarājya). According to Bankim Chandra, Kṛṣṇa's approach attacked the trunk of the tree, the problem of religion and morality, rather than its branch, social reform. He believed that social and

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[16] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "The Confession of a Young Bengal," Mookerjee's Magazine (December, 1872), reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, pp. 139-140.

[17] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "The Study of Hindu Philosophy," Mookerjee's Magazine (May, 1873), reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, p. 142.

political reform would follow naturally upon religious regeneration. Bankim Chandra accused the social reformers of merely creating noise and show, and called upon everyone to join together and concentrate on religious and moral regeneration.[18] In another article he wrote that many people consider religion as the preserver of order and stability in society, but that religion should also be regarded as the creator of progress. According to Bankim the aim of the "new Hinduism" which he advocated is to promote orderly progress in society.[19]

Bankim Chandra saw the root of progress in religious regeneration, but he also believed that the growth of national feeling among groups of people could aid moral and material progress. He wrote that, "For many reasons national devotion has been extinct in India for a long time. Because it has become extinct the Hindus have not made any national accomplishments." He also pointed out that in recent times the Sikhs and the Marathas created national feeling and their progress was remarkable. In the same way, if all of India were knit in a bond of national unity unprecedented progress

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[18]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Kṛṣṇacaritra, p. 160.

[19]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Deśiya nabya samājer sthiti o gati" (Stability and Progress of the New Native Society), Pracār, Vol. IV (1887-1888), pp. 339-343.

would result, according to Bankim Chandra.[20] Bankim was also deeply interested in the history of the renaissance in Europe and he felt that the root of European national feeling was the development of national literature and culture. He hoped that his own literary efforts would help the creation of a national culture for Bengal.[21] Bankim Chandra's program for the uplift of his country included religious reformation, cultural renaissance and the creation of national feeling. He wanted to see the emergence of a religious reformation, cultural renaissance and nationalist feeling as had occurred in the history of the West, but he hoped that these developments could be based on the growth of indigenous ideas and institutions.

Bankim Chandra's Religious Ideology

Since Bankim Chandra's primary interest was moral regeneration his religious ideology was mainly concerned with ethics. According to Bankim Chandra himself:

> I am not one of those who think that a belief in God, or in a number of gods, or in a future existence, or anything else which does not admit of proof, constitutes religion. But when such belief, or any belief whatever, furnishes a basis for conduct of the individual towards

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[20] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Bhārat Kalaṅka" (India's Stigma) Baṅgadarśan (1872), reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. II, pp. 240-241.

[21] B. B. Majumdar, A History of Political Thought from Rammohan to Dayananda (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1934), pp. 178-179.

> himself as well as towards others . . . it is religion . . . . Religion, viewed thus is in theory a philosophy of life; in practice it is a rule of life.[22]

In early life Bankim had expressed interest in purely philosophical concepts, but he was primarily interested in religion as the principle behind human conduct.[23]

There were two facets to Bankim Chandra's religious ideology; he was at once a defender of Hindu tradition and a reinterpreter of that tradition. His generalized defense of Hinduism can be seen in his journalistic controversy with the Scottish missionary, William Hastie.[24] Hastie began the controversy by writing to object to an elaborate and extremely expensive funeral ceremony held by a prominent citizen of Calcutta for his grandmother. Hastie took the occasion to make a general attack on Hindu idolatry, and more specifically on men who had lost faith in idolatry but had not the courage to openly break with it. Hastie went on

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[22]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Letters on Hinduism, as reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, p. 237.

[23]In the early seventies he wrote an article on the Sāṁkhya philosophical system in Indian thought which is mainly a discussion of philosophical theory. But even in this article he speculates on the effect of Indian philosophy on the development of Indian civilization, suggesting that the preoccupation of Indian philosophical systems with suffering led to fatalistic attitudes which weakened Indian civilization and prevented social progress. See Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Sāṁkhyadarśan," Baṅgadarśan (1772), as reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. II, p. 222.

[24]Hastie was the principal of the General Assembly's Institution (later called the Scottish Church College).

to attack the philosophy of Hinduism which he called "Brahmanism" (from the description of this philosophy it seems that he had Śaṁkara's *advaita Vedānta* in mind). According to Hastie, Hindu philosophy is a negative idealism which gives no foundation for practical activities of life or interest in science, allows no moral meaning to life, for all is illusion including the individual soul. He proposed that Indian progress depended on the adoption of Christianity.[25] Bankim, under the pen name of Ram Chandra, wrote that Hastie had not understood the Hindu scriptures. He did not defend the *advaita Vedānta* which Hastie had apparently attacked, but rather stressed the *Sāṁkhya* dualistic philosophical heritage in his defense. He wrote that the basic insight of Hindu philosophy is the differentiation of matter and spirit which is exemplified in the *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* legend of Bengali *Vaiṣṇavism*. He defended the Hindu worship of images, saying that it is not really idolatry because the Hindu never confuses the image with God.[26] In a later essay Bankim Chandra clarified this idea by explaining that image worship is a secondary form of devotion which may purify the heart of the

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[25] *Statesman* (September 23 and 29, 1882), as reprinted in *Baṅkim Racanābalī*, Vol. III, pp. 110-115, 117-123.

[26] *Statesman* (October 28, 1882), as reprinted in *Baṅkim Racanābalī*, Vol. III, pp. 103-106.

worldly who are not ready to discern God.[27] Bankim Chandra felt called upon to defend Hindu tradition from what he believed was destructive criticism by the missionaries because he was convinced that self-respect and self-esteem were necessary for the development of individual moral character and for national development. On the other hand, he frankly admitted that his own religious ideology reinterpreted the Hindu tradition. He referred to his own religious thought as "new Hinduism" and discussed its role in the progress of India.[28]

Bankim Chandra's religious ideology was mainly concerned with ethics, but like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas he believed that metaphysical doctrines influence ethical principles. He supported a qualified non-dualism similar to the metaphysical doctrines of Rajnarain Bose and Rabindranath Tagore of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj. He saw a fundamental distinction between nature and soul, but he also believed in an underlying unity.[29] He did not deny that Śaṁkara's advaita Vedānta, which conceived reality as undifferentiated unity, may be an

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[27] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Dharmatattva (Calcutta, 1888), as reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. II, p. 646.

[28] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Deśiya Nabya Samājer sthiti o gati," Pracār, pp. 339-343.

[29] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "The Intellectual Superiority of Europe," Statesman (October 28, 1882), as reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, p. 105.

aspect of the truth. However, he thought that the concept of a real universe, and a God with concrete moral attributes, would be more conducive to the improvement of man. He dismissed Śaṁkara's metaphysics as a lower level in the development of Hindu religious thought. Bankim believed the qualified non-dualism of Vaiṣṇavism provides a God with concrete moral attributes for the moral guidance of man.[30] According to Bankim:

> Religion in its fullness cannot be found in the quality-less god of the Vedanta, because he who is without qualities cannot be an example to us . . . . The basis of religion is a God with qualities, such as is mentioned in our Puranas and in the Christian Bible, because He and only He can be our model. The worship of an impersonal God is sterile; only the worship of a personal God has meaning to man.[31]

Bankim Chandra also believed in the possibility of human progress. In his work Kṛṣṇacaritra (Biography of Krishna) he wrote that God was incarnated in Kṛṣṇa to uphold dharma (righteousness) and create the dharmarājya (kingdom of righteousness),[32] but he did not picture the dharmarājya as only something of the past. He asked his countrymen to con-

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[30] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Kṛṣṇacaritra, p. 171.

[31] Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. II, p. 593, as translated by T. W. Clark, "The Role of Bankimcandra in the Development of Nationalism," C. H. Phillips, ed., Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 432.

[32] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Letters on Hinduism as reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, pp. 267-269.

centrate on a new religious and moral regeneration which would result in political and social uplift as well. Kṛṣṇa is portrayed as the ideal man whose dedication to moral regeneration of his country should be emulated in the present day. Bankim Chandra envisioned a golden age of individual and national greatness in the future; his philosophy had a utopian flavor. In the novel Ānandamaṭh a group of sannyāsins were fighting to create a golden age of material and moral progress when the Eternal Religion would flourish.[33]

With regard to the truly religious life for man, Bankim Chandra held up the life of Kṛṣṇa as pictured in the Mahābhārata as the ideal.[34] He was firmly against asceticism or withdrawal from the world, which was emphasized as the religious ideal in both the Śakta and the Vaiṣṇava schools of traditional Hinduism in Bengal. According to Bankim Chandra, asceticism arose out of fear of the mysterious powers of nature, and fear of offending these higher powers led to a sense of sin. Hindu religion did not fully develop a doctrine of repentance, according to Bankim, so sin had to be expiated by the performance of the penance of physical depri-

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[33]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Ānandamaṭh, trans. Aurobindo and Barindra Ghose (Calcutta: Basumati Sahitya Mandir, n.d.).

[34]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Kṛṣṇacaritra, p. 160.

vation.[35] Bankim Chandra did not believe that physical deprivation or the suppression of the senses was conducive to spiritual growth. He suggested that religion should involve a balanced cultivation of all the physical, mental, and spiritual faculties of man. He believed that physical and mental strength were necessary for spiritual development. For Bankim Chandra, Kṛṣṇa represented the summation of the development of the physical, mental, and spiritual faculties of man. In the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā, Kṛṣṇa was portrayed as a powerful warrior, a good tactician and administrator, just, good, forgiving, and brave. He led a full, active life devoted to the welfare of others.[36] The religious life for man includes not only the perfection of the individual according to Bankim Chandra, but the attempt to perfect society. Kṛṣṇa is ideal because he worked for the good of his people and for the creation of the good society.[37]

With regard to ethics, Bankim Chandra was against the particularistic ethical code of traditional Hinduism with its emphasis on ritual. He said that Kṛṣṇa's ethical code was ideal because he interpreted karmayoga, the path of works, as service to man rather than the carrying out of

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[35] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "The Study of Hindu Philosophy," Mookerjee's Magazine (May, 1873), as reprinted in Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Essays and Letters, B. N. Banerji and S. K. Das, eds., (Calcutta: Sahitya Parishad, 1940), pp. 160-169.

[36] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Kṛṣṇacaritra, p. 150.

[37] Ibid., pp. 150-151.

Vedic rituals.[38] According to Bankim, Hindu ritualism must give way to the general ethical principle of devotion to the good of humanity before moral regeneration can take place in India. In _Kṛṣṇacaritra_, Bankim made the statement all that is good for mankind is truth, and all that is supported by religion is truth; therefore, all that is good for mankind is supported by religion.[39] Kṛṣṇa represented the ethical ideal of a man who actively worked for the good of mankind. Bankim adopted an activist and universalist ethic in which the good of humanity is the criterion of ethical conduct.

In spite of his bitter differences with the _Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas_ on the issue of social reform, Bankim Chandra's religious ideology was very similar to theirs. He stressed the reality of the universe and an activist ethics based on universal ethical standard. Like the _Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas_, Bankim Chandra had also been greatly influenced by his reading in western philosophy. He was a great admirer of Auguste Comte and his concept of a religion of Humanity. Bankim's emphasis on humanitarianism and his doctrine of cultivation of all human faculties seem to have reflected the influence of John Stuart Mill. But Bankim Chandra insisted that these ideas and ideals existed in Hindu thought in a better form. The Comtean Religion of Humanity is imperfect

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[38] _Ibid._, p. 204.

[39] _Ibid._, p. 206.

because it did not include a belief in God.[40] In the life of Kṛṣṇa Bankim Chandra found a similar religion of Humanity which included belief in God and was based on the incarnation of God. He also found in the life of Kṛṣṇa the principle that the criterion of true religion is the welfare of humanity which he says is similar to the Utilitarian philosophy of Bentham and Mills.[41] According to Bankim Chandra, the spiritual principles necessary for a moral regeneration was implicit in Hinduism and did not need to be imported from outside. The true principles of Hinduism must be rediscovered and reapplied for religious reformation and regeneration.[42] Bankim Chandra stated that religious reform must evolve from within Hindu religious tradition. Western religious and philosophical thought could only act as a stimulus to re-examination of the real meaning of the Hindu

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[40] Amales Tripathi, "Bankim Chandra and Extremist Thought," Bengal Past and Present, No. 85 (Jan. June, 1966), pp. 176-177.

[41] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Kṛṣṇacaritra, p. 256.

[42] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Letters on Hinduism, as reprinted in Bankim Racanābalī, Vol. III, p. 240. In Bankim Chandra's words: "If the ultimate principles of Hinduism be found true and sound, and the practical applications of those principles erroneous, the wise course is not to subvert and annihilate Hinduism--which is now the cry of educated India, but to discard the erroneous applications and remodel life in accordance with its true principles. That is the direction in which religious reform is most desirable, and in which alone I trust its success is possible."

tradition.

Bankim Chandra attempted to resuscitate those aspects of Hindu tradition which illustrated ethical activism and moral courage. In _Kṛṣṇacaritra_ he attempted to point out that the _Vaiṣṇava_ heritage contained an activist ethic and an ideal man of great moral courage, Sri Kṛṣṇa. He wanted Bengalis to turn away from the devotional _Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa_ cult of Chaitanya and worship Kṛṣṇa as the activist, the fighter against evil as pictured in the _Mahābhārata_.[43] Bankim Chandra pointed out that the religion of Kṛṣṇa was not the pacifism of the Buddha or Chaitanya. Although Kṛṣṇa adopted a forgiving attitude with regard to injuries to himself, when an evildoer injured society he fought with violence if necessary to defeat evil. In the _Bhagavad Gītā_, according to Bankim Chandra, Kṛṣṇa urged Arjuna to fight a war for a righteous cause when non-violent means had failed to deter the evildoers.[44] It is the moral duty of men in whatever walk of life to resist evil. Violent resistance to protect life and religion can never be a sin. The correct moral code, according to Bankim Chandra, is a balance between strength and forgiveness as exemplified in the great Sri

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[43]There was no reference to Kṛṣṇa as the youthful lover of Rādhā and the _gopīs_ in the _Mahābhārata_. This was a later development in the _Purāṇas_. The _Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa_ cult became widespread in Bengal with the advent of Chaitanya.

[44]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, _Kṛṣṇacaritra_, p. 142.

Kṛṣṇa.[45] He also expressed the idea that _Vaiṣṇavism_ must free itself of the passive ethic of Chaitanya in the novel _Ānandamaṭh_. In this novel, a group of _Vaiṣṇava_ _sannyāsins_ band together to fight the Muslims and restore the eternal religion. A new recruit questions:

> Why are the Santans Vaishnavas? To the Vaishnavas non-violence is the highest religion.

One of the leaders replies:

> That is the Vaishnavism of Chaitanya Dev. The Vaishnavism which was the outcome of the atheistic Buddhist religion--non-violence is its sign. The sign of true Vaishnavism is the suppression of the wicked and the salvation of the world.[46]

Bankim Chandra was not an exclusively _Vaiṣṇava_ religious thinker. Although he believed that worship of Kṛṣṇa of the _Mahābhārata_ would resuscitate ethical activism he also wrote of _Śaktī_, the consort of Śiva as the symbol of energy, activity and force.[47] The philosophical and religious essays of Bankim Chandra deal primarily with the interpretation of the character and worship of Kṛṣṇa, but _Śaktī_ worship plays a prominent role in his novels. Bankim Chandra's reconstruction of Kṛṣṇa worship must have seemed dry and intellectual to his contemporaries since it was not rooted in the _Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa_ tradition of Bengali faith and

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[45] _Ibid._, pp. 197, 252.

[46] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, _Ānandamaṭh_, p. 97.

[47] In traditional Hindu theology _Śaktī_ represented the creative energy of God.

literature. On the other hand, Bankim Chandra's references to Kālī and Durga, the manifestations of Sakti, in his novels carried great emotional appeal to his contemporaries.[48]

The worship of Kālī was a prominent feature in the earlier novels such as Kapālkuṇḍala (1866) and Mṛṇālini (1869). In the novel Rājsiṁha, published in 1882, worship of the goddess is first identified with patriotism when the victorious Hindu soldiers shout "victory to the Mother!" And in the novel Sītārām (1887) the heroine Srī seems to personify Kālī when she provided the inspiration for Hindu soldiers in a skirmish with Muslim opponents.[49] In Ānandamaṭh the sannyāsins are formal worshippers of Kṛṣṇa, but their real inspiration seems to derive from the worship of Śaktī. Durga and Kālī are identified with the motherland; Kālī with the degradation of existing India, and Durga with her glorious future. At the same time Śaktī is the Mother to whom the sannyāsins dedicate themselves and for whom they are ready to sacrifice their lives. Kālī is also a source of strength and power, a symbol of violence, energy, and activity.[50] Bankim Chandra's portrayal of Kālī as well as Kṛṣṇa stressed the principle of activism and forceful resistance to evil. Bankim Chandra did not relate the worship of Kālī

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[48] T. W. Clark, op. cit., p. 434.

[49] Rachel Van M. Baumer, Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the Bengali Renaissance, pp. 243-244, 207-209.

[50] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Ānandamaṭh, pp. 31-32.

in his novels and the Kṛṣṇa theme of his philosophical essays into a unified interpretation of Hinduism as T. W. Clark has pointed out.[51] Although Clark is correct that Bankim did not develop a consistent theology, Bankim's interpretation of both Śaktī and Kṛṣṇa were linked in that they were meant to inculcate an ethics of social activism and patriotism. His interpretation of both strands of Bengali faith were aimed at cultivation of ethical qualities of courage, strength, and the will to resist evil.

Religion and Political Ideology

Bankim Chandra wanted India to become a nation, but he recognized the benefits as well as the debits of British rule. He realized that the economic effects of British rule had not been entirely salutory; while the conditions of the educated few may have improved the conditions of the masses had not.[52] On the other hand, he believed that the loss of independence was partially compensated by the introduction of European science and literature which had jolted India out of stupor. The novel Ānandamaṭh is often cited to prove that Bankim Chandra advocated a revolutionary struggle for Indian independence. The novel depicted a band of sannyāsins

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[51]T. W. Clark, op. cit., p. 434.

[52]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Baṅgadeśer Kṛṣak," (Peasantry of Bengal), Baṅgadarśan (1772), as reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. II, p. 292.

who dedicated themselves to fight for the liberation of the motherland from the foreign rule of the Muslims. However, at the end of the novel, when the British defeated the Muslims in Bengal, the sannyāsins are urged to abandon the fight and welcome English rule as necessary in the development of the motherland:

> Unless the English rule this land, there is no chance of the renaissance of the eternal religion. . . . In order to restore the eternal religion, at the outset knowledge of the material world must be preached. . . . The English are past masters in the knowledge pertaining to the material world. They are adept in the art of teaching. So we shall make the British our rulers. Through English education our people attaining knowledge of the material world will also be made capable of understanding inner knowledge.[53]

It is not clear whether Bankim Chandra thought the time was ripe to discard the British teachers. We cannot be sure whether he would have supported a revolutionary movement during his own lifetime. Undoubtedly, he looked forward to the independence of his country, and probably he would have sanctioned the use of violence to obtain freedom, if it proved necessary. His novel Ānandamaṭh sanctioned the use of violence by ascetics devoted to the cause of liberation of the motherland, and in Kṛṣṇacaritra he defended the use of violence in the Mahābhārata War because it was a righteous war to create the dharmarājya. In his own day he was mainly concerned with building national feeling among the peoples

[53]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Ānandamaṭh, pp. 191-192.

of India.

The question of whether Bankim Chandra advocated Bengali nationalism, Hindu nationalism, or all-India nationalism is very complex. In Ānandamaṭh, published in 1880, he spoke of a motherland of seventy millions which could only refer to Bengal.[54] He believed that nationalism must be based on a renaissance of literature and culture which seemed to imply that nationalism could only develop within the linguistic region of Bengal. He wrote of the necessity to create national feeling through the cultivation of the Bengali language.[55] On the other hand, he believed that the greatest prospect for progress depended on the union of all the peoples of India in a bond of national feeling, and he noted that the cultivation of English would be necessary to create this bond.[56] Bankim Chandra probably felt that the basic strand of unity in India was Sanskrit-Aryan culture. In common with many of his contemporaries he saw the Vedic culture of the early Aryans as a golden age of enlightenment and morality, and he devoted many essays to

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[54]It is interesting to note that although there were approximately seventy million in Bengal presidency, only about forty million were Bengalis.

[55]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Bengali Literature," Calcutta Review (1871), as reprinted in Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, pp. 123-124.

[56]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Letter to Shambu Mukherjee" (March 14, 1872), Baṅkim Racanābalī, Vol. III, p. 170.

the history of the Aryans in which he proclaimed them as the greatest of races.[57] Thus, in his view the core of Indian culture was Hinduism and the Sanskrit heritage which made it difficult to envision a role for the Muslim population in Bankim Chandra's nationalism. He never dealt openly with the problem of the Muslim role in an Indian nation, and many of his novels deal with Hindu resistance to Muslim rule in western India as well as in Bengal. Bankim Chandra did not develop a coordinated and comprehensive theory of nationalism. The over all impression from his writings suggests that he may have supported an Indian federal nationalism built on the separate national cultures of the linguistic regions united by their common Hindu heritage, but he never clearly expressed this idea.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji's nationalism and his religious ideology were interrelated as different aspects of his program of Indian progress. He felt that a nation must be based on religious and moral regeneration, and at the same time that national feeling could be an aid to moral progress. The basic ethical principle of Bankim Chandra's Neo-Hinduism was love of humanity. He believed that religious and moral regeneration in India depended on the recognition that love and service for others is the basis for religion rather than ritualistic observances. In

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[57]Rachel Van M. Baumer, Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the Bengali Renaissance, pp. 138-141.

Dharmatattva, published in 1888, Bankim Chandra wrote that in the modern world love for one's fellowmen can best be inculcated by the cultivation of national feeling. According to Bankim Chandra the ideal is love for all living beings, but in the present imperfect stage of civilization love for one's countrymen would be a step forward from an ethical point of view. Bankim wrote that there are three stages leading to the development of love of God; love of self, love of family, and the higher stage of love of nation. According to Bankim:

> Saving one's own people is a much greater duty than saving oneself, and saving one's own country is much greater than saving one's own people. When bhakti toward God and love for all people are the same thing, it can be said that, apart from bhakti towards God, love of country is the greatest duty of all.[58]

Bankim Chandra believed that the creation of national feeling in India would be a very difficult task because India possessed hardly any tradition of nationalism. He suggested that the masses could only develop fellow feeling for their countrymen if nationalism could be related to religious symbols. In the novel Ānandamaṭh he envisioned the nation as the Mother, Durga or Kālī. The nation was to be synonymous with Śaktī, the energy or creative force of God. According

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[58]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Dharmatattva, as translated by Rachel Van M. Baumer, The Reinterpretation of Dharma in Nineteenth Century Bengal: Righteous Conduct for Man in the Modern World (unpublished article presented at a symposium on aspects of religion in South Asia, S.O.A.S., University of London, March 29-April 2, 1971), pp. 20-21.

to Bankim Chandra the nation is the combined *Śaktī* or energy of its seventy million constituents.[59] While Kālī was the symbol of the nation in Bankim Chandra's thought, Kṛṣṇa was the prototype of the nationalist dedicated to creating the righteous policy.[60]

Bankim Chandra's religious doctrine of *dharmarājya* introduced in the *Kṛṣṇacaritra* was also an important ingredient in his nationalist theory. He believed in moral and material progress and the possibility of creating a godly kingdom on earth. The great Sri Kṛṣṇa and the *Vaiṣṇava* ascetics of *Ānandamaṭh* devoted their lives to the creation of a nation in which the truth of the eternal religion will triumph.[61] Bankim Chandra pictured the creation of the Indian nation as the triumph of religious truth.[62] At this point religion and nationalism became intermingled in his utopian vision.

The activist ethics of Bankim Chandra's Neo-Hinduism

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[59] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, *Ānandamaṭh*, pp. 31-32.

[60] Patriotic women were occasionally identified with Kālī in the novels of Bankim Chandra. Sri, the heroine of *Sītārām*, who inspired warriors to battle, at times appears to be a personification of Kālī. See Rachel Van M. Baumer, *Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the Bengali Renaissance*, pp. 207-209. To a lesser extent this is also true of Sashi in *Ānandamaṭh*. It is interesting to note that in the first decade of the twentieth century one of the patriotic secret societies was led by a niece of Rabindranath Tagore, Sarala Ghoshal, who was identified with the spirit of Kālī by her followers (see Chapter Six).

[61] Bankim Chandra Chatterji, *Ānandamaṭh*, pp. 191-192.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

were also important in his nationalist theory. Bankim urged the duty of resistance to evil with force if necessary, and the duty to fight for righteousness. Bankim Chandra believed that personal discipline should be directed to balanced and rational cultivation of all human faculties rather than suppression of the physical. The purpose should be dedication to the duty of love and service of humanity. He reinterpreted the Hindu tradition as a this-worldly ascetic discipline in the service of man with Kṛṣṇa as the prototype.[63] Kṛṣṇa was not a _sannyāsin_ in the traditional sense of the word, and Bankim Chandra generally disapproved of the physical deprivation involved in _sannyāsa_. However, in _Ānandamaṭh_ the traditional _sannyāsa_ involving withdrawal from family ties was urged in connection with dedication to the motherland. The _sannyāsins_ in _Ānandamaṭh_ were dedicated to a this-worldly goal of creating a nation devoted to religious truth.[64] In both _Kṛṣṇacaritra_ and _Ānandamaṭh_, Bankim Chandra advocated the transformation of the Hindu tradition of _sannyāsa_ to a this-worldly objective, the service of the nation.

The Influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterji

Bankim Chandra Chatterji was closely associated with an active group of Bengali literary men. His close associ-

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[63]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, _Kṛṣṇacaritra_, p. 160.

[64]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, _Ānandamaṭh_, p. 191.

ates included the playwright Dinabandhu Mitra and the poet Nabinchandra Sen, who wrote patriotic poems.[65] He also had close ties with the Hindu revivalists who opposed the Sadhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. According to Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra was partially responsible for introducing to the public Sashadhar Tarkachuramani, the Hindu revivalist who wished to return to the glorious days of Brahman supremacy. Rabindranath added: "Not that Bankim Babu ever thoroughly identified himself with this cult. No shadow of Sashadhar was cast on his exposition of Hinduism as it found expression in the Prachar - that was impossible."[66] Bankim Chandra was more closely associated with the Nabajīban school of Hindu thought than with Sashadhar Tarkachuramani. In the eighties Bankim Chandra's journal the Pracār and Akshay Chandra Sarkar's journal the Nabajīban led the movement challenging the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma advocacy of westernization.[67] The writers of the Nabajīban were obviously men of English education; in their defense of Hindu thought they frequently referred to western philosophers, such as Spencer, to support their arguments. The Nabajīban championed all aspects of Hinduism. They investigated Śaṁkara's Vedānta

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[65] Das Gupta, op. cit., pp. 15, 137.

[66] Rabindranath Tagore, Reminiscences (London: Macmillan, 1917, 1942), p. 251.

[67] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I (Calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1932), pp. 424-427, 444-445.

and Vaiṣṇava devotionalism.[68] They believed that the basic institutions of Hinduism were good but they could be purified and improved. For instance, one article supported the continuance of the institution of caste but suggested that it should be based on merit rather than birth.[69] Although the Nabajīban group was popularly called revivalist, in reality they wanted investigation of Hindu tradition and reform. Like Bankim Chandra they looked for indigenous ideas on which to build a modern nation. Their revivalism was closely linked to reform.

In politics, the Nabajīban group gave qualified support to the Indian National Congress. But they suggested that the Congress should be less concerned with winning political rights from the British and should turn to internal measures to strengthen the policy by working for economic progress and enlightenment of the masses. They objected to the strategy of petitioning the British.[70] Bankim Chandra expressed similar ideas in Pracār.[71] Bankim Chandra was not

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[68]"Vaisnava Doctrine," Nabajīban, Vol. I (1884-1885), pp. 289-297.

[69]"Morality of the Caste System," Nabajīban, Vol. II (1885-1886), pp. 441-451. "Hindu Religion and Society," Nabajīban, Vol. I (1884-1885), pp. 172-176.

[70]"Congress," Nabajiban, Vol. IV (1887-1888), pp. 442-448. "What is the National Congress?" Nabajīban, Vol. V (1888-1889), p. 552.

[71]Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Deśiya Nabya Samājer sthiti o gati," Pracār, pp. 339-343.

an isolated thinker. In the eighties he was part of a significant movement among the English-educated elite. This movement was concerned with maintaining national and personal self-esteem by pointing out the value of Hindu tradition. At the same time the movement aimed at growth and development along indigenous lines. Their program was in many ways similar to the Ādi Brāhma Samāj. The difference was one of emphasis. The Ādi Brāhmas were more critical of the Hindu heritage and more selective in choosing those aspects upon which to build a modern society. The Nabajīban group and Bankim Chandra Chatterji insisted that self-confidence in Indian traditions must be restored before growth and development could proceed.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji was probably the most articulate spokesman presenting an alternative to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj in the eighties. His greatest influence was in stimulating Bengalis to look to their own culture for guidelines for development. Undoubtedly, the novels which emphasized Śaktī worship were more widely read and had more appeal than the religious essays dealing with Kṛṣṇa. The Vaiṣṇavas among the elite and masses of Bengal adhered to a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult, so for them the cult of Kṛṣṇa of the Bhagavad Gītā had limited appeal. Bankim's interpretation of the Śaktī symbol to represent the nation was more influential among the predominantly Śakta Bengali elite. The identification of Kālī with nation was the religious symbol

most commonly used during the anti-partition agitation of 1905. Aurobindo Ghosh, a leader of the agitiation, explained why the Kālī symbol had such power to evoke nationalist sentiments:

> The new intellectual idea of the motherland is not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition of the desirability of freedom is not an inspiring force . . . . It is not until the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not until she takes shape as a great divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and patriotism that works miracles and saves doomed nations is born. To some men it is given to have that vision and reveal it to others. It was thirty years ago that Bankim wrote his great song . . . . The Mantra has been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of Patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself . . . . A great nation which has had that vision can never again be placed under the feet of the conqueror.[72]

Bankim Chandra's interpretation of the character of Kṛṣṇa provided only a minor element in the religious symbolism used in the anti-partition agitation. The Anuśīlan Samiti, a patriotic secret society founded about 1899 which became involved in terrorism in 1907, was founded by men who were acquainted with the religious writings of Bankim Chandra. According to its members the name Anuśīlan Samiti was taken from Bankim's writings on "anuśīlan" to mean the cultivation of the total faculties of man, mental, moral, and physical.

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[72]Aurobindo Ghosh, The Renaissance in India (Chandernagore: Parbatak Publishing House, 1920), p. 25.

This society promoted Bankim's idea that individuals of moral and physical strength could save India. The members of the Samiti identified themselves with the sannyāsins of Ānandamaṭh and both the worship of Kālī and Kṛṣṇa of the Bhagavad Gītā was included in their initiation ceremonies.[73]

Bijoy Krishna Goswami's Vaiṣṇava Cult

In the late eighties and nineties of the last century another group of Neo-Vaiṣṇava thinkers emerged who were linked together as disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami. Bijoy Krishna was a former Brāhma who had played a prominent role in the formation of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. Goswami was a Brāhmaṇ, but his family background was not associated with the Bengali elite. His family, who claimed to be direct descendants of a disciple of Chaitanya, lived in a village of west Bengal and earned their living as professional priests and landholders. For a while Bijoy Krishna took up this hereditary profession of Vaiṣṇava priest, but later he decided to go to Calcutta where he studied the vernacular course at the Sanskrit College.[74] Afterwards, he enrolled in medical school, but soon after he converted to Brāhmaism

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[73]Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, Biplabī Jībaner Smṛti [Memoirs of Revolutionary Life] (Calcutta: Indian Associated Publishing Co., Ltd., 1962), pp. 190-196. See also Rowlatt Sedition Report (Calcutta: 1918), p. 17.

[74]Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, Ltd., 1951), p. 148.

and became a Brāhma missionary.[75] If he had any knowledge of English it was very limited; his questioning of custom was due to reading Sanskrit classics while studying at the Sanskrit College. He was fascinated by the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, and he began to wonder why he should worship idols and be concerned with rituals if there was only one God.[76] His readings in the Vedas upset his Vaiṣṇava faith and he became a zealous convert to the Brāhma Samāj. He was initially attracted by the Brāhma blend of reformed religious doctrine with a devotional spirit rather than their social reform program, but he became a firm supporter of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma social reform program for a brief period. But after a few years as missionary of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, Goswami began to turn back to his childhood Vaiṣṇava faith; in 1884 he sought a Vaiṣṇava guru and was initiated by him.[77] He continued to serve as a Sādhāraṇ Brāhma missionary in Dacca, but he decorated the walls of his dwelling with pictures of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and began to initiate Brāhmas as his personal disciples. The executive committee of the

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[75]Sivnath Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Brahmo Mission Press, 1919 and 1920), Vol. I, pp. 149-151.

[76]Bipin Pal, Prabartak Bijoy Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī (Pioneer Bijoy Krishna Goswami) (Calcutta: Pravartak Publishing House, 1914), p. 35.

[77]Dwijidas Datta, Behold the Man (Calcutta, 1930), p. 220.

Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj became alarmed that he was reintroducing image worship and guruism into the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. In 1886 Goswami resigned from the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj under pressure.[78] After this break Bijoy Krishna Goswami became the leader of an independent Vaiṣṇava cult. He returned to the traditional Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa faith popularized in Bengal by Chaitanya. In 1893 he went to the religious melā at Allahabad and set up an image of Chaitanya to bring the message of Chaitanya's bhakti to this gathering of Hindu religious men.[79]

Goswami's new cult gathered many disciples in Calcutta and Dacca, including several Brāhmas. The orthodox Hindu disciples claimed that Bijoy Krishna's Brāhmaism had been an error, and he had returned to the traditional religion. However, Goswami himself did not repudiate Brāhmaism, and he did not ask his Brāhma disciples to give up their membership in the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj.[80] Nevertheless, he seems to have dropped most of the reformist principles of the Brāhma Samāj. He himself gave up social service work and led the ascetic life of the orthodox sannyāsin

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[78]Goswami's letters to the executive committee of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj during the controversy are given in Dwijadas Datta, Behold the Man, pp. 229-233.

[79]Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, Prayogdhāme Kumbhamelā (Religious Festival in Prayog) (Calcutta: Guru Press, 1894).

[80]Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II, p. 205.

although he did not ask all his disciples to give up worldly activities. He instructed his disciples not to perform anything contrary to the Hindu *śāstras*, discarding the *Brāhma* principle that the individual conscience should be the ultimate guide of conduct, and the *Brāhma* revolt against the Hindu emphasis on rituals.[81] He also instructed his disciples to obey their parents under all circumstances[82] which seemed to negate his own revolt against his family when he was a young *Brāhma* and the whole *Brāhma* revolt against the precedence of family obligations in Hindu thought. He also believed that he himself possessed special spiritual and occult powers. He spoke of dreams and visions in which he received God's messages.[83] In short, he conformed to traditional expectation of what a Hindu religious leader should be. He had given up his youthful rebellion against Hindu religious and social norms and returned to his family vocation of *Vaiṣṇava guru*. It is not uncommon in any culture for a man to rebel in youth and then conform to tradition in middle age. Moreover, Goswami was not English-educated and he was one of the few leaders of the *Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj* whose connections with the Bengali elite were

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[81] Saradakanta Bandhopadhyay, *Ācārya Prasaṅga* (About the teacher) (Calcutta, 1925), p. 56.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[83] Saradakanto Bandhopadhyay, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 53-56.

tenuous.

Bijoy Krishna Goswami's Disciples

Although Goswami himself returned to traditional doctrines his *Vaiṣṇava* cult was significant for the development of Neo-*Vaiṣṇava* reformist religious doctrines. He had two types of disciples. The majority were orthodox Hindus who adhered to traditional beliefs and practices. These disciples were never organized into any religious organization and the movement declined after Goswami's death in 1899.[84] At the same time there was a small group of disciples who combined *Vaiṣṇava* devotionalism with devotion to social service. These disciples included Aswini Kumar Datta, Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, Bipin Chandra Pal, Sundari Mohan Das, Satish Chandra Mukherjee, and Pramatha Mitra. All of these disciples were active in educational and social service projects or in political movements. Several of them formulated Neo-*Vaiṣṇava* faiths.

The disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami have never been studied as a group, although several of them were well known public figures. The only reference to their linkage as co-disciples of B. K. Goswami occurs in a single line in

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[84]There is very little information on the followers of Bijoy Krishna Goswami. Judging from the few references to names it seems that he attracted more followers from the elite than the usual *Vaiṣṇava* cult. See Bipin Pal, *Saint Bijoy Krishna Goswami* (Calcutta: Bipin Chandra Pal Institute, 1964), p. 69.

an article by Sumit Sarkar.[85] Since many of them were key figures in the articulation of Neo-Hindu ideology and a militant political position in the nineties and during the anti-partition movement, their personal connections as co-disciples and the similarities in their ideologies deserve to be investigated.

Aswini Kumar Datta, one of the most famous disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami, was born in 1856 in Barisal in the Backergunge district of east Bengal. His family were Kāyastha and his father was a judge.[86] Aswini Kumar attended an English medium school and earned an M.A. in English literature from Calcutta University. He and his father founded a school and a college in the district town of Barisal, and Aswini Kumar taught in this college most of his life.[87] He had been associated with the Brāhma Samāj in the late seventies and in 1886 he was initiated by Bijoy Krishna Goswami.[88] He was very popular among the college students and he organized a student social service organization to help the poor in times of epidemic or famine. He also organized a People's Association

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[85]Sumit Sarkar, "Trends in Bengal's Swadeshi Movement, Part I," Bengal Past and Present, Vol. 84, Part I (January - July, 1965), p. 26.

[86]Suresh Chandra Gupta, Asvīni Kumār (in Bengali) (Kashipur: Anandamoyee Ashram, 1928), pp. 25-26.

[87]Ibid., p. 204.

[88]Ibid., pp. 532, 536.

in his district devoted to educational and health projects among the villagers, and he was a delegate to the Indian National Congress several times.[89]

Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, who was a close associate of Aswini Kumar Datta, was also from a Kāyastha family of Barisal. He joined the Brāhma Samāj in the seventies and for a time served as a missionary working with the lower castes of Barisal and Khulna.[90] He was converted to Goswami's Vaiṣṇava cult in the early eighties and he encouraged both Aswini Kumar and Satish Mukherjee to be initiated by Goswami.[91] He regarded Bijoy Krishna as a saint and attended a Hindu religious festival near Allahabad with him.[92] Manoranjan was concerned about the economic development of his country and he bought and operated a mica mine. He co-operated with Aswini Kumar in the People's Association and attended the Indian National Congress.[93]

Bipin Chandra Pal and his childhood friend, Sundari Mohan Das, were also initiated by Bijoy Krishna Goswami. They were both from Kāyastha families of Sylhet. They

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[89] Ibid., pp. 306-307, 340-341, 345-348.

[90] Ibid., p. 502.

[91] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origin of the National Education Movement (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1957), p. 190.

[92] Bipin Chandra Pal, Character Sketches (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, Ltd., 1957), p. 253.

[93] Suresh Chandra Gupta, op. cit., pp. 502-503.

shared a room during their college days in Calcutta.[94] Bipin Pal became a schoolteacher and a journalist, and Sundari Mohan Das earned a medical degree and practised medicine.[95] Sundari Mohan Das had joined the Brāhma Samāj in Sylhet and he encouraged Bipin Pal to join in Calcutta.[96] When the schism came in 1878 they both became Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas. Bipin Pal served on the general committee of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and toured Bengal as an informal missionary. Sundari Mohan Das was also on the general committee, and in 1899 he gave free medical services for the Brāhma boarding school in Calcutta.[97] Around 1895 they were both initiated by Bijoy Krishna Goswami and accepted him as their spiritual guide.[98] However, neither of them renounced their Brāhma ties and they remained active in the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj. They were both active in the svadeśī movement of 1905.

Another famous disciple of Bijoy Krishna Goswami was Satish Chandra Mukherjee, a prominent leader of the national

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[94] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 299.

[95] Twenty-third Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1901 (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Office, 1902), p. 12.

[96] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. I, p. 302.

[97] Twenty-second Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1900 (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Office, 1901), p. 25.

[98] Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "Satish Mukherjee," Hindusthan Standard (April 19, 1948).

education movement. He was born in 1865 in a Brāhmaṇ family in the Hooghly district in west Bengal. His father was English-educated and served as a translator for the Calcutta High Court.[99] Satish Mukherjee was sent to Calcutta to attend an English school and he earned a degree in law and a master's degree in English literature. He tried working as a lawyer but ultimately made his career as a schoolteacher and college lecturer.[100] He was initiated by Bijoy Krishna Goswami in 1893.[101] Education was the main interest of his life and he tried to establish an independent school that would combine the best of ancient Indian educational techniques and western techniques. He also established a journal called the Dawn which advocated educational reform and cultural revival.[102]

Pramatha Mitra was another famous disciple of Bijoy Krishna Goswami. He came from a Kāyastha family and received an English education. He earned a law degree and became a barrister at law at the Calcutta High Court. He was converted by Bijoy Krishna Goswami in the nineties.[103] His subsequent

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[99] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement, pp. 181-182.

[100] Ibid., pp. 183-187.

[101] Ibid., pp. 190-192.

[102] Benoy Kumar Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 25-28.

[103] Sumit Sarkar, "Trends in Bengal's Swadeshi Movement, Part III," Bengal Past and Present, Vol. 84, Part 2 (July - December, 1965), p. 149.

career included leadership of a secret revolutionary society.[104]

Like their counterparts in the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj all of these disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami came from upper caste families and they were all English-educated. Aswini Kumar Datta, Sundari Mohan Das, Satish Mukherjee, and Pramatha Mitra earned college degrees. Most of them were professional men. Aswini Kumar Datta, Bipin Pal, and Satish Mukherjee were teachers, Sundari Mohan Das was a medical doctor, and P. Mitra was a lawyer. With respect to caste, education, and occupation, these men were very much like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma leaders discussed in the previous chapter--indeed four of them had been associated with the Brāhma Samāj.

Bijoy Krishna Goswami did not lead these disciples to withdraw from the world. All of them were active in social service projects, education, or in politics. He did not pressure them to give up their social activism. On the contrary, when Aswini Kumar Datta became anxious after his conversion because his work in the world made it impossible for him to observe the ascetic rules of Goswami's cult, Goswami reassured him that in his case worship of God could be expressed in work.[105] Satish Chandra Mukherjee also became very serious about his religious life after his initia-

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[104]Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

[105]Suresh Chandra Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 537.

tion by Goswami. He wanted to renounce the world and become a sannyāsin, but Bijoy Krishna Goswami discouraged him saying that it would not be the correct path for him. Satish later decided that he would devote his life to educational work for the youth of the country.[106] Although Bijoy Krishna himself had retreated from an activist religious ethic, and renounced the world, he does not seem to have discouraged select disciples from working in the world. He had been a prominent Brāhma and perhaps he had not lost sympathy with Brāhma ideals entirely.

The conversion of the four men who had been associated with the Brāhma Samāj to Goswami's cult is very interesting. Aswini Kumar Datta was intrigued by Brāhma religious ideas in the late seventies. He attended Brāhma services and delivered several speeches in support of Brāhmaism although he was never formally initiated. He married in the orthodox way but educated his wife according to Brāhma ideas after marriage. Aswini Kumar had doubts about joining the Brāhma Samāj because he was concerned about hurting his family, but also because he was concerned about the alienation of the Brāhma Samāj from Hindu society. He felt that one must remain within Hindu society to contribute to its progress.[107]

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[106]Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Origins of the National Education Movement, pp. 190-193.

[107]Suresh Chandra Gupta, op. cit., pp. 551-552.

After his initiation by Goswami he combined Brāhma principles with a Vaiṣṇava faith in a series of lectures given in 1887-1888.[108] Bipin Pal's return to the Vaiṣṇavism of his childhood is striking because in the Brāhma Samāj he had been an extreme progressive and had many debates with the Hindu revivalists. However, in the nineties it had become obvious that the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj could not effect widespread conversions or widespread change. Bipin Pal became restless and his wife's death turned his attention to religion.[109] In the early nineties he studied the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and noticed that he had been greatly interested in Hindu philosophy. Bipin Pal then turned to the study of the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gītā and was soon initiated by Bijoy Krishna Goswami.[110] According to his autobiography he was repelled by the "atmosphere of medieval faith and ideals" among Goswami's disciples, but Goswami gave him valuable insight into the meaning of the Hindu scriptures and the Hindu tradition.[111] About ten years later he began to formulate a Neo-Vaiṣṇava faith.

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[108] Aswini Kumar Datta, Bhaktiyoga, translated by Gunada Charan Sen (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1890, 1959), p. ii.

[109] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II, pp. 96-108.

[110] Ibid., pp. 121-122, 132-135, 208-212.

[111] Ibid., p. 213.

All the Brāhma disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami remained dedicated to the Brāhma principle that the truly religious life is one of active social service. It seems that their conversion to Goswami's Vaiṣṇava cult was a search for a basis in indigenous tradition for their activist ethical principles. The growing force of opposition to British rule in the eighties and nineties no doubt contributed to their desire for a sense of identification with their own society and its traditions. At the same time they were not willing to give up modernist ideals imbibed from the Brāhma Samāj. Goswami helped them to free themselves from the taint of slavish western imitation and overcome the sense of alienation from their own culture. He allowed his disciples considerable freedom. He gave them respect for Hindu religion and philosophy but he did not insist that they observe the tradition of ascetic withdrawal from worldly activities to achieve religious illumination. He appears to have stimulated Aswini Kumar Datta and Bipin Chandra Pal to investigate their own cultural tradition and create a modernist Vaiṣṇava religious doctrine.

The Program of Goswami's Disciples

Goswami's disciples did not function as an organized group like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, nor did they have an organized program. However, these six disciples who were active in education and politics developed similar attitudes

toward the problems of their society. On the whole they were agreed that their society was in need of change and improvement but they adopted a cautious attitude toward the assimilation of western ideas and institutions. They felt that Indians should first understand their own cultural tradition. Satish Mukherjee's magazine the Dawn devoted a great deal of space to investigation of Hindu religion and philosophy. He also discussed western science and philosophy.[112] It was not a revivalist paper, but it advanced the idea that a proper appreciation of what is valuable in other cultures can only be built on proper appreciation of one's own.[113] Aswini Kumar Datta also believed that modern Indians should appreciate their own cultural tradition. He gave a series of lectures on Hindu thought in Barisal.[114] Even Bipin Pal gradually came around to the position that progress depended on the appreciation of one's own culture and defended the Hindu tradition which he had once so bitterly attacked. He first began to speak in defense of Indian culture when he went to England in 1898 and America in 1899

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[112] "The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer," Dawn, Vol. II, No. 10 (December, 1898), pp. 240-242. "Sri Chaitanya and His Message," Dawn, Vol. II, No. 6 (September, 1898), pp. 171-179.

[113] "Object or Policy of the Dawn," Dawn, Vol. II, No. 1 (March, 1898), p. ii.

[114] Suresh Chandra Gupta, op. cit., p. 543.

and 1900.[115] When he became active as a militant nationalist in 1905 he even proclaimed that Hindu culture is marked by special spiritual insight.[116] As a whole Goswami's modernist disciples agreed with Bankim Chandra Chatterji that a sense of self-confidence and self-esteem with regard to Hindu tradition would facilitate individual and national development. With proper evaluation of their own cultural tradition, avenues of development and ways to assimilate what was valuable in western tradition would become clear. These disciples desired social change, but they opposed westernization.

In consonance with their desire for social change along indigenous lines they advocated a policy of self-help independent of the British government with regard to educational, economic, and political development. Aswini Kumar Datta believed that the work of village uplift should be initiated by Indians themselves without relying on British government programs. His projects were independent though he maintained good relations with British government officials prior to the anti-partition agitation of 1905. His own students' association and political association took up independent work to help with famine relief and improve

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[115] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Bipin Pal and India's Struggle for Swaraj (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958), p. 5.

[116] Bipin Pal, The New Spirit (Calcutta, 1907), pp. 47-48.

health conditions.[117] Satish Mukherjee was a leading advocate of the development of an independent national concept of education outside the official framework. In 1895 he founded an experimental school which tried to adapt the old Sanskrit teaching methods to modern conditions. The school included emphasis on Hindu scriptures and moral development of the total personality which Satish Mukherjee believed was the ideal of the schools in ancient India. Satish Mukherjee thought that this approach could be combined with study of modern science.[118] The school did not succeed, apparently because it could not give recognized degrees necessary for employment. Satish Mukherjee continued to express his views on education in the Dawn magazine founded in 1897. He criticized official university education saying that it merely prepared young men for government service and failed to prepare them for enterprise in other fields which resulted in educated unemployment. He called for a more complete approach aimed at the education of the total man. The university should stimulate original thought rather than examination cramming mentality according to Satish Mukherjee. To do this the student requires a background in his own cultural heritage which the official university system did not

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[117] Suresh Chandra Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-220, 340-341.

[118] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *The Origins of the National Education Movement*, pp. 195-199.

provide, as well as an open mind toward other cultures.[119] In 1902 Satish Mukherjee established the Dawn Society to supplement official university education with lectures and discussion periods and study of the languages and cultures of India.[120] As a whole the program of Goswami's disciples had many similarities with the ideas of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the Tagores in the Ādi Brāhma Samāj. In the words of Bipin Pal they advocated a "new spirit of self-reliance and self-assertion."[121]

Bijoy Krishna Goswami had not established a religious organization. His followers had been attracted by his personality and spiritual reputation, and the group disintegrated after his death. He had dropped the western organizational forms which were used by the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj.[122] His disciples talked of the need for development along indigenous lines, but they believed that western organizational forms were essential to progress and development and could not be discarded. The Student's Association and People's Association of Aswini Kumar Datta and Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta were organized with electoral proceedings to

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[119] "University Education," Dawn, Vol. II, No. 7 (September, 1898), pp. 207-213.

[120] Benoy Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

[121] Bipin Pal, "The New Spirit," Bande Mataram, October 15, 1906.

[122] Bipin Chandra Pal, Saint Bijoy Krishna Goswami p. 69.

select the president, vice-president and other officers, and to decide the policies of the organization.[123] Bipin Pal relied on the press to propagate his views. In 1901 he founded the New India and in 1905 he established Bande Mataram. Satish Mukherjee organized the Dawn Society and the Dawn magazine to propagate the views of the society. The Dawn Society was mainly a student organization with elected officers and voting procedures for members.[124] By the late nineteenth century the forms of organization introduced by the British, electoral and parliamentary procedure, had become part of the culture of the Bengali elite.

The Neo-Vaiṣṇava Ideology of Aswini Kumar Datta and Bipin Pal

Two of Goswami's disciples, Aswini Kumar Datta and Bipin Chandra Pal, explicitly formulated a Neo-*Vaiṣṇava* ideology. Aswini Kumar first expressed his reformist *Vaiṣṇavism* in a series of lectures given in Barisal in 1887-1888 which were published in book form in 1890.[125] He accepted the basic premises of *Vaiṣṇava* metaphysics that there is a differentiation between God and his universe, and that the universe and human soul are real. He also accepted the *Vaiṣṇava* concept that the ultimate human goal is the bliss

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[123] Suresh Chandra Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

[124] Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[125] Aswini Kumar Datta, *Bhaktiyoga*, p. i.

of pure love of God.[126] But he did not believe that this goal should be pursued by withdrawal from the meshes of society for the unalloyed pursuit of the love of God in the manner of Chaitanya. According to Aswini Kumar, devotion to God should be expressed by working in the world with no thought of personal gain. To support his position he cited the Bhagavad Gītā:

> Remember one thing--it has nowhere been said that you must renounce the world in order to rise even to the highest kind of devotion . . . . In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna has not counselled Arjuna to renounce the world, he has positively enjoined upon him not to do so. He has repeatedly affirmed the principle that the duties of this world have to be discharged with a mind divested of all worldly desires.[127]

Aswini Kumar, like Bankim Chandra, turned to the portrayal of Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata rather than the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa tradition to support an ethic of this-worldly activity. The Bhagavad Gītā has been used in a similar way to support activity in social and national movements by Tilak in western India and later by Mahatma Gandhi.[128] While the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas believed that the whole Vaiṣṇava religious tradition was inimical to the development of an activist

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[126]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[127]Ibid., p. 197.

[128]See D. MacKenzie Brown, "The Philosophy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak: Karma vs. Jnana in the Gita Rahasya," Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (February, 1958), pp. 197-206. Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

ethic, Bankim Chandra and Aswini Kumar found an activist strain in Vaiṣṇava thought. Aswini Kumar also held that a religious and moral life was furthered by adherence to discipline in every day work. He cited Benjamin Franklin's schedule as a model for promotion of good habits in every day life that are necessary for higher spiritual development.[129] Aswini Kumar's view of the source of ethical principles was quite similar to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma view. According to Aswini Kumar, Vaiṣṇava bhakti should lead to universal love of man without distinction of caste, color or wealth. The true Vaiṣṇava ethics is the love and service of mankind.[130] He also believed in individual judgment in moral questions and suggested that the norms of society should be challenged if they are not consistent with true morality. He expressed disapproval of a man who "is opposed in principle to the custom of early marriage, and yet marries his children in direct violation of that principle, for the simple reason that people will otherwise speak ill of him."[131] Aswini Kumar advised young people:

> From a study of the lives of great men, you will learn the lesson that they have always clung to whatever they have considered to be right, and

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[129] Aswini Kumar Datta, _op_. _cit_., p. 127.

[130] _Ibid_., pp. 28-30, 108.

[131] _Ibid_., p. 154.

> never cared a straw for what others might think. The more you can realise this truth, the less there will be of moral cowardice in you.[132]

In spite of the fact that his guru was a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa devotee, Aswini Kumar Datta, like Bankim Chandra, turned to the portrayal of Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata which does not include the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa myth to support an activist ethics. Thus the main source of Vaiṣṇava reformism in Bengal was the interpretation of the Mahābhārata tradition rather than the popular Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult. However, much later one of Bijoy Krishna Goswami's disciples, Bipin Chandra Pal, did try to create a reformist version of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa faith of Chaitanya. Bipin Pal first expressed the idea that Vaiṣṇavism contains the corrective to the excesses of advaita Vedānta in a lecture to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj given in 1903.[133] While he was in prison in 1906-1907 during the anti-partition movement he seems to have clarified his Neo-Vaiṣṇava ideas. In his book An Introduction to the Study of Hinduism, written while he was in prison and published in 1908, he expressed his conviction that Vaiṣṇavism is a higher stage of religion than Vedānta because it does not negate the reality of the world and it encourages positive action.[134] He ex-

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[132] Ibid., p. 154.

[133] Bipin Pal, "Sadharan Address," New Spirit (1903), pp. 168-172.

[134] Bipin Chandra Pal, An Introduction to the Study of Hinduism: a Study in Comparative Religion (Calcutta: S. C. Gupta, 1908).

pressed similar ideas in The Soul of India (1911), and Europe Asks: Who is Sri Krishna? (1913). But his full exposition of a reformist Neo-Vaiṣṇava religious ideology based on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult of Chaitanya was not expressed until the publication of Bengal Vaisnavism in 1920. In this work Bipin Pal used the term "Neo-Vaisnavism" to indicate a Vaiṣṇava faith applicable to modern life. He believed that the true ideals of Chaitanya had been smothered by "medieval brahminism" in Bengal and called for the restoration of his true message.[135] Actually, Bipin Pal combined the principles of the Brāhma Samāj with his Vaiṣṇava faith. He wrote that Vaiṣṇavism was against asceticism and withdrawal from the world. He pictured the Bengali saint Chaitanya as a crusader against caste and brāhmaṇic ritualism, almost as a social reformer of the Brāhma type![136] According to Bipin Chandra Pal, Chaitanya had really advocated service of God through service of man although his message had been obscured by his later disciples.[137] In this later period Bipin Pal incorporated an activist ethic into the Chaitanya cult of Bengal, but prior to this attempt, Neo-Vaiṣṇava thought generally steered clear of the popular Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult of the masses and turned to the portrayal of Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata

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[135]Bipin Chandra Pal, Bengal Vaisnavism (Calcutta: Bengal Centenary Committee, 1920, 1962), p. 112.

[136]Ibid., p. 99.

[137]Ibid., p. 99.

for inspiration.

The religious ideology of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas resembled Sādhāraṇ Brāhma more than established Vaiṣṇava religious ideology. The Neo-Vaiṣṇavas agreed with traditional Vaiṣṇava thought that the goal of humanity is realization of the love of God, but they differed with respect to the path to reach this goal. Whereas the traditional Vaiṣṇava faith emphasized escape from the meshes of society (intermittently for the ordinary man and permanently for the saint) for devotion to God, the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas agreed with the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas that love of God could be best cultivated by love and service for man or work for the improvement of human society. Furthermore, the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas advocated universal, humanitarian ethical standards rather than the particularistic concept of fulfilling social duties accepted by the established faith. Like the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas supported an activist and universalistic ethic. The difference was that the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas tried to link these doctrines with indigenous Vaiṣṇava tradition.

Goswami's Disciples and the Nationalist Movement

The six disciples of Bijoy Krishna whom we have been discussing were all active in the nationalist movement which began with the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905. Aswini Kumar Datta, Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, and Bipin Pal were all important leaders of the Extremist nationalist party in Bengal. Satish Mukherjee and Sundari Mohan

Das participated in the national education movement, and Pramatha Mitra was a leader of the Anuśīlan Samiti which became involved in the revolutionary movement.

Aswini Kumar had acquired political stature in his district of Backergunge during the eighties and nineties. He had organized a Student's Association and a People's Association which began to organize in the rural areas as well as the town of Barisal and he had attended the Indian National Congress.[138] Aswini Kumar was critical of Congress tactics because he felt that political progress depended on mobilizing support outside the English-educated elite, rather than appealing to the British.[139] In 1904 he organized a Sivaji festival in Barisal which was significant in the nationalist movement of Bengal because it represented solidarity with Tilak and the militant nationalists of western India.[140] After partition was announced, and leaders in Calcutta called for boycott of English goods and promotion of indigenous manufacturers, Aswini Kumar organized a National Friends Society (Svadeśī Bāndhab Samiti) in Barisal to protest against the Bengal partition and to promote the svadeśī movement and the accumulation of wealth in the

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[138]Suresh Chandra Gupta, op. cit., pp. 306-340.

[139]Ibid., pp. 346-348.

[140]Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958), p. 167.

country.[141] The society printed a circular appealing to the people of Backergunge to buy only indigenous goods and to ostracize those who bought foreign goods. When Lieutenant Governor Fuller threatened strong measures, Aswini Kumar withdrew the circular, but the Lieutenant still ordered gurkhā troops into Barisal.[142] The British were very nervous because the svadeśī movement was more successful in Backergunge than in any other district. Aswini Kumar's National Friends Society recruited support from landowners in the rural areas as well as from the English-educated elite of Barisal. The landlords also organized support among their tenants. Barisal was the only area in Bengal where the elite leadership managed to create support for svadeśī among the Muslim and lower caste Hindu peasantry.[143] In 1908 the National Friends Society of Barisal was declared illegal by the British.[144] In the Congress session of 1907 at Surat, Aswini Kumar tried to help Lala Rajpat Rai bring the Moderate and Extremist groups together, but he ultimately joined the Extremist group after the Congress split.[145] In 1908 he was exiled by the British government. Aswini Kumar's support of

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[141] The Statesman, December 2, 1905.

[142] Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 8, 1906.

[143] Bipin Chandra Pal, Character Sketches, p. 58.

[144] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 72.

[145] Suresh Chandra Gupta, op. cit., pp. 353-355, 495.

the *svadeśī* movement was consistent with his earlier views because he had already developed a *svadeśī* political ideology of self-help and self-development in the eighties and nineties. He was rather hesitant about supporting a broad program of passive resistance such as the Extremists Bipin Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh wanted. His retreat before Fuller's threats showed that he was less enthusiastic about provoking direct confrontation with the British than the other Extremists. Nevertheless, after 1907 he chose the Extremist or militant party in their struggle with the Bengal moderates.

Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, who had been a close associate of Aswini Kumar was also active in the anti-partition movement, especially in the national education movement. He participated in the organizational meetings in Calcutta and founded a national school at Giridhi.[146] In 1905 the government issued the Carlyle Circular prohibiting student participation in public meetings and asking school principals to enforce this rule on pain of loss of government aid.[147] Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta became the Secretary of an *Anti-Circular Society* formed in November, 1905 to organize student resistance to the Carlyle Circular. He traveled in east Bengal to organize student resistance to

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[146] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *The Origins of the National Education Movement*, p. 116.

[147] *Statesman*, October 22, 1905.

the circular and to organize the students to support the boycott movement.[148] At the Bengal Provincial Conference held in Barisal in 1906 the police singled out the members of the Anti-Circular Society in their assault, and Manoranjan's son was severely injured.[149] Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta was an Extremist from the beginning. He often had arguments with his friend Aswini Kumar who was nervous about politicization of students and the possibility of confrontation with the British.[150]

Dr. Sundari Mohan Das also participated in the svadeśī movement although he took a more moderate stand. He was reported to have attended boycott meetings in Calcutta[151] and he was also a member of the national council of education which formed the Bengal National College.[152] He was a supporter of constructive svadeśī.

Satish Mukherjee was the leader of the national education movement. His Dawn magazine supported boycott and national education, and the Dawn Society opened a svadeśī store in 1903, two years before the svadeśī movement really

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148 Bengalee, November 15, 1905.

149 Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 162.

150 Suresh Chandra Gupta, op. cit., pp. 502-503.

151 Bengalee, September 5, 1905.

152 Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement, p. 121.

began.[153] According to the Dawn magazine the boycott was really a constructive movement to protect Indian industries.[154] In late 1905 the Dawn Society was disbanded so that its members could devote all their time to the National Council of Education. Satish Mukherjee's association formed a nucleus of support for the national education movement.[155] When the Bengal National College was established in 1906, Satish Mukherjee became superintendent. The college aimed to provide a national education which emphasized the study of Indian culture, languages and literature, and at the same time including courses on western science.[156] In many ways it was a continuation of the educational experiments Satish Mukherjee had begun in the nineties.

Pramatha Mitra was another disciple of Bijoy Krishna Goswami who played an important part in the nationalist movement. He was one of the founders of the Anuśīlan Samiti (society for the promotion of culture and training). The name of the society was taken from Bankim Chandra's idea of the cultivation of the total faculties of man which he called anuśīlan (culture or cultivation).[157] The original

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[153] Ibid., pp. 283, 287.

[154] Ibid., p. 234.

[155] Benoy Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

[156] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom, p. 199.

[157] Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., p. 196.

idea of the society was to build men of moral and physical strength to serve their country. The concept of Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda that men of moral character must also develop physical prowess was also held by the leaders of the Anuśīlan Samiti and time was devoted to gymnastics and lathi practice.[158] Its program also included mental and moral training. The young people heard lectures by prominent educators, religious men and scientists, and classes in the Hindu scripture , the Bhagavad Gītā and the writings of Vivekananda were held.[159] There is no indication that the Anuśīlan Samiti was founded for the purpose of terrorist violence in 1901-1902. In 1903 P. Mitra was president of the Samiti but he gradually lost influence after 1905 when a group within the Samiti demanded the initiation of terrorist revolutionary violence. P. Mitra believed that an extensive revolutionary organization must be built up first.[160] P. Mitra and other members of the Anuśīlan Samiti were influenced by the activist interpretation of the Gītā by Bankim Chandra and other Neo-Vaiṣṇava thinkers and by the Neo-Vedānta activism of Vivekananda. Before Vivekananda's death in late 1902 members of the Anuśīlan Samiti visited him regularly at Belur Math. Both Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda

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[158] Ibid., p. 190.

[159] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 17.

[160] Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., pp. 40-45.

interpreted the Hindu religious institution of sannyāsa to mean renunciation of family ties for active work in the service of man rather than renunciation for withdrawal from society. Recruits were asked to regard themselves as modern sannyāsins in the service of the nation.[161]

Bipin Pal became one of the foremost militant leaders during the 1905 anti-partition campaign. In 1906 he founded the newspaper Bande Mataram which became the mouthpiece of the militant party. In the same year he led the extremist group in the Bengal delegation to the Indian National Congress which pressured for a resolution supporting boycott of English goods.[162] He traveled through east Bengal spreading the passive resistance doctrine of non-cooperation with British administration as well as boycott against British goods.[163] His militant passive resistance stand during the anti-partition agitation was surprising because during the eighties and nineties he had been a constitutional moderate who had relied on the benevolence of British intentions. The change in his political outlook was primarily due to his alarm over the conservative trend of British policy

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[161] Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, In Search of Freedom (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967), p. 15.

[162] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Bipin Pal and the Struggle for Swaraj, p. 40.

[163] Ibid., p. 53.

under Curzon, which convinced him that the British did not intend to gradually extend self-government to India as he had previously believed.[164] He decided that the British would only yield under pressure so he adopted the strategy of passive resistance (he never advocated revolutionary violence).[165] Bipin Pal himself indicated that his conversion to Goswami's Neo-Vaiṣṇava cult facilitated his change from a moderate to a militant political stand. As a Brāhma his moderate political position had been reinforced by fear of a resurgence of Hindu orthodoxy.[166] He was a Sādhāraṇ Brāhma who had suffered alienation from his family and social ostracism to establish his personal freedom, and he had looked to the British as natural protectors of freedom and progress. Then after his conversion to Neo-Vaiṣṇavism he defended Hinduism while visiting America in 1899-1900,[167] and in 1903 he advanced the idea that Bengal Vaiṣṇavism was really a challenge to Hindu orthodoxy and might contain the seeds of progress.[168] He was gradually trying to amalgamate

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164 New India (December 21, 1904), as summarized in Report on the Native Owned English Newspapers in Bengal (1905), p. 17.

165 Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1953), p. 52.

166 Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II, pp. 51-52.

167 Ibid., pp. 271-275.

168 Bipin Pal, "Sadharan Address" (1903), New Spirit, pp. 168-172.

Brāhma principles of social activism and individual freedom with his Vaiṣṇava heritage which gave him faith that the Hindu tradition contained avenues of growth and development.[169] It was easier for him to articulate a militant political position during the anti-partition agitation because he no longer feared that the overthrow of British rule would return India to stagnation.

Neo-Vaiṣṇavas who were active in politics generally took a more militant stand during the anti-partition agitation than the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas. The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas remained constitutional moderates or became supporters of constructive svadeśī. They retreated when the Extremist Party called for extended boycott, passive resistance and revolutionary violence. Among Goswami's disciples, Bipin Pal, Aswini Kumar Datta, Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta and P. Mitra were important leaders of the Extremist party which advocated passive resistance, or, in the case of P. Mitra, preparation for revolutionary violence. Satish Mukherjee and Sundari Mohan Das were identified with the constructive svadeśī position. Like most of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma nationalists they seem to have been doubtful about whether the extended passive resistance program of the Extremists might bring about violent confrontation with the British. Aswini Kumar

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[169] Bipin Pal, "Shivaji Festival Speech" (1902), New Spirit, pp. 42-50.

also had doubts about the possibility of violence but he ultimately identified himself with the Extremist party.

This Neo-Vaiṣṇava group had advocated programs of svadeśī for years before the anti-partition agitation began. Aswini Kumar, Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, Satish Mukherjee and P. Mitra had all advocated a program of self-help and self-development independent of the British during the nineties. Satish Mukherjee's Dawn magazine had been important in the development of support among the English-educated elite for a program of national education and independent economic action in the decade preceding the anti-partition movement. Aswini Kumar's People's Association and Student's Association Satish Mukherjee's Dawn Society, and P. Mitra's Anuśīlan Samiti all stressed the value of indigenous tradition and the need for independent action in the political, economic, and educational spheres. The Dawn Society and the Anuśīlan Samiti played an important role as previously organized centers of support for the nationalist movement. Aswini Kumar's People's Association had laid the groundwork for the National Friends Society which organized the boycott movement in Barisal. Together with Bankim Chandra and the Ādi Brāhmas this Neo-Vaiṣṇava group had played an important role in spreading the idea that progress and national development need not be dependent on imitation of the west. They helped to spread the concept that progress could develop out of Hindu culture among the elite. Several of them had developed

reform versions of _Vaiṣṇava_ doctrines similar to the doctrines of Bankim Chandra, which incorporated an ethic of social activism into the _Vaiṣṇava_ tradition. The integration of modern activist ethics with their own cultural tradition in the Neo-_Vaiṣṇava_ faith helped to give them confidence that they could create a modern policy independent of the British. Unlike the _Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas_ they had no fear that the overthrow of British rule would result in the return of India to stagnation. Their faith in the modernizing of indigenous tradition facilitated their articulation of a militant nationalist stand during the anti-partition agitation of 1905.

CHAPTER V

The Neo-Vedānta of Swami Vivekananda

The Śakta religious cult with its philosophical foundation in Vedānta was the mainstream of upper caste religious thought in Bengal. In the late nineteenth century an important new Śakta sect appeared around the saint, Sri Ramakrishna. His disciples under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda created a new interpretation of the Śakta-Vedānta faith.

The Faith of Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna, the most revered religious figure in recent Bengali history, was born in 1836 in a village ten miles north of Calcutta in the Hooghly district. Ramakrishna, whose actual name was Gadadhar Chatterji, received some vernacular and Sanskrit education in the village but he was never exposed to English education.[1] His family adhered to the traditional Brāhmaṇ occupation as priests, and they were also small landholders in the village.[2] After the death of his father the family experienced financial difficulties and his brother went to Calcutta to open a Sanskrit school.

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[1] Life of Sri Ramakrishna (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1924, 1964), pp. 1-10, 17, 18.

[2] Christopher Isherwood, Ramakrishna and His Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1965), pp. 11-12, 37.

When Gadadhar was sixteen he went to Calcutta to help his brother and was exposed for the first time to an urban environment.[3] He was at first very much disturbed by the new life of the metropolis which seemed to challenge the traditional social and religious values of his village life. His initial reaction was to reconfirm his own traditional values.[4] For example, Gadadhar strongly objected when his brother agreed to serve as priest in a Kālī temple built by a widow of *Śūdra* caste. He told his brother that it was improper for a high caste *Brāhmaṇ* to perform worship for a *Śūdra* and reminded him that their father had never done so. But his brother felt that the fine distinctions of the village social code did not apply in Calcutta, especially when their financial condition was so desperate. Although Ramakrishna finally yielded to his elder brother's judgment and served as an assistant in the temple,[5] his initial objections illustrate his strong feeling for the social and religious code of his society.

Hindu tradition recognizes two styles of life, the life of the ordinary man who fulfils his religious obligations by performing the rituals and social duties suitable

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[4] John B. Magee, *Sri Ramakrishna and John Woolman: A Study in the Sociology of Sanctity* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1950), p. 303.

[5] *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 54.

to his station, and the saint who sheds social ties and withdraws from the world to seek religious enlightenment. Prior to his illumination Ramakrishna showed no sign of revolt against the traditional social code. At the age of twenty-two he married a girl of five in the traditional manner.[6] His dispute with his brother shows his respect for the regulations of caste. But once he became a man of religion he completely discarded all concern with caste and status.[7] Ramakrishna, like Chaitanya and other Hindu saints, did not advocate revolt against the social code for the householder. He believed that it was only for the man of God that the social code ceased to have relevance, and he often ridiculed the _Brāhma_ concern for social reform.[8] Ramakrishna felt deep compassion for human suffering but the concept of social change to lessen suffering was meaningless to him. He was solely concerned with liberating man from all material ties to achieve realisation of God.

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[6] _Ibid._, pp. 101-102.

[7] When Ramakrishna was seeking religious enlightenment he used to remove the sacred thread denoting _Brāhmaṇ_ caste status while meditating and then put it back on. In this intermediate stage while seeking enlightenment he wished to discard worldly attachment while meditating on God, but he adhered to caste rules while in society. Thus, the purpose of his removal of the sacred thread was quite different from that of the _Brāhma_ who removed it to signify rebellion against the caste system. _Ibid._, p. 68.

[8] _Ibid._, p. 284.

After his brother's death in 1856, Ramakrishna became the priest of the Dakshineswar Kālī temple on the outskirts of Calcutta. At this time Ramakrishna developed a desire to go beyond the ritualistic duties of priest and attain realisation of God. He became obsessed with the worship of Kālī, the Divine Mother, to whom the Dakshineswar temple was dedicated. He entreated the image to reveal itself to him like a small child who had lost his mother. He finally experienced a state of trance in which all material objects vanished and he was only conscious of the Divine Mother.[9] Subsequently, he often lost consciousness of outward surroundings. Although Ramakrishna's characteristic mode of worship was the love of the child for the Mother he also attempted to realize God through other modes of bhakti. He became engrossed in the Vaiṣṇava devotion to the child Rāma and worshipped God with love of parent for child. He also approached the love of God as the love of woman for man in the manner of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult. In this phase he lived as a woman and identified himself completely with Rādhā and the madness of her love for Kṛṣṇa.[10] He also worshipped in the Muslim and Christian manner. Then in 1865 a sannyāsin came to Dakshineswar who believed that God should be

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[9] Ibid., pp. 69-71.

[10] Christopher Isherwood, op. cit., pp. 110-114, 124.

realized as the formless absolute of advaita Vedānta. Ramakrishna at first had great difficulty in realizing the formless One under the guidance of his new guru, because the vision of Kālī always intervened. But he gradually gained a vision of absorption into Brahmaṇ and recognized the unity of his own soul with Brahmaṇ. Ramakrishna eventually saw no difference between the bliss of love of God, the bhakti tradition, and the goal of absorption into God of the Vedānta. He believed that in the end love of God and absorption into God are the same.

Ramakrishna set forth a powerful statement of the central insights of Hindu religious tradition. He took a non-dualist view of the ultimate nature of reality. He regarded Kālī, the creator and destroyer of the universe, as a power of God inseparable from Him. In the ultimate sense Kālī and the multiplicity of the universe and human souls were all Brahmaṇ in his view.[11] Ramakrishna was not a sys-

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[11]According to Ramakrishna: "When the Supreme Being is thought of as inactive--not creating, sustaining or destroying--I call Him Brahman or Purusha, the Impersonal God. When I think of Him as active--creating, sustaining, and destroying--I call him Shakti or Maya or Prakrti or the Personal God. But really the distinction between Brahman (God Inactive) or Impersonal God and Shakti (God Active) is a distinction without a difference. Brahman and Shakti are One (Abheda) just as fire and its dahika shakti (burning power) are one . . . ." Mahendranath Gupta, The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna as translated in Dawn, Vol. II, No. 1 (April, 1898), p. 3.

tematic philosopher but he seemed to have agreed with Śaṁkara in viewing the universe as illusory in so far as it is taken as an entity independent of Brahmaṇ.

Ramakrishna accepted the traditional cyclical cosmology of Hinduism and he did not see the universe or mankind as progressing. With regard to the ultimate human goal he saw no contradiction between the bliss of love of God or union with God. He accepted the division between the religious life of man for the householder and the man who had devoted himself to religion. Ramakrishna upheld the traditional social and religious code for the life of the householder.[12] Ramakrishna's greatness lay not in a radical new interpretation of the Hindu faith, but in the restatement of its fundamental insights when some members of the elite were questioning the validity of their entire religious tradition.[13] His own spiritual personality seemed to give expression to the best in both the Śakta and Vaiṣṇava tradition of the realisation of God.

In the seventies Ramakrishna's fame as a religious man

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[12]John Magee, op. cit., pp. 91, 134.

[13]The official life of Ramakrishna published by the Advaita Ashram of the Ramakrishna Mission gives the impression in some passages that Vivekananda's doctrine of social service was contained in Ramakrishna's doctrine at least in embryonic form. This was an artificial attempt to sanctify Vivekananda's interpretation. Ramakrishna had a spirit of compassion and love for fellow creatures but he did not preach work for social uplift as a part of religion.

began to spread and a group of disciples gathered round him. His visit to Keshab Chandra Sen, leader of the Brāhma Samāj, in 1875, opened an avenue of contact with the English-educated elite of Calcutta. After Keshab Chandra and Protap Mazoomdar both wrote articles on Ramakrishna many Brāhmas and other members of the English-educated elite in Calcutta came to know of Ramakrishna and began to visit him.[14] In the early eighties a group of young men, most of whom came from upper caste families and had English education, became his disciples. Although Ramakrishna deplored the intellectual scepticism of these young people he was at the same time inspired by contact with their fresh outlook so different from his own.[15] These young men who had been exposed to English-education and the urbanized culture of Calcutta became his principal disciples. Thus, although the content of Ramakrishna's faith was not radically different from that of many Hindu saints before him, his following was quite different. As a result his message underwent a transformation in the hands of his disciples. His disciple, Swami Vivekananda, was the principal creator of a Neo-Vedānta religious outlook in Bengal.

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[14]Swami Gambhirananda, History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), pp. 4-5.

[15]Ibid., p. 6.

Swami Vivekananda's Religious Quest

Narendranath Datta, later known as Swami Vivekananda, was born in 1863 in a prominent Kāyastha family in Calcutta. His great grandfather had amassed a fortune as the managing clerk and associate of an English attorney, and had built a family mansion in north Calcutta. Narendranath's father was educated in both Persian and English and made his career as a lawyer at the High Court of Calcutta.[16] The Dattas were a respectable family of Calcutta who had seized new opportunities to amass wealth under British rule and had retained their position by going into the professions. Narendranath's father earned a good income and was the main support of the joint family. He entertained lavishly and was acquainted with many prominent members of the Bengali elite.[17] He voiced approval of Vidyasagar's campaign to allow girl widows to remarry but he disapproved of the Brāhma Samāj and was fairly orthodox in private life. Narendranath's mother was literate in Bengali and his sisters received a little education.[18] Thus, Narendranath grew up in a family which respected the orthodox social code and was yet open to new ideas. He received an English education at Presidency College and

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[16]Bhupendranath Datta, Swami Vivekananda: Patriot Prophet (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1954), p. 48.

[17]Ibid., p. 152.

[18]Ibid., p. 139.

then at the General Assembly's Institution where he earned a B.A. in 1883. Afterwards he enrolled in the law department but he did not finish his degree.[19]

Soon after the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj was organized in 1878, Narendranath became a member. Prior to the schism, he had attended Brāhma lectures. According to Vivekananda himself, he was attracted to the Brāhma Samāj by its message of social reform.[20] His conversion greatly disturbed his father who had absorbed the influence of English education and a professional life without feeling the need for social rebellion.[21] His father's professional life necessitated entertainment of people of all castes but his family life under the control of an uncle was kept orthodox.[22] But Narendranath seems to have been incapable of this type of compromise through compartmentalization of values and modes of behavior, perhaps due to a self-assertive streak in his temperament. When he was fourteen or fifteen it is reported:

> Many noted scholars visited his father. Naren would listen to their discussions, and occasionally joined in them. In those days, he sought, nay

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[19] Ibid., pp. 133-134.

[20] Swami Vivekananda, Swami Vivekananda on Himself (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary, 1963), p. 23.

[21] Bhupendranath Datta, op. cit., p. 102.

[22] Ibid., pp. 100, 105, 107.

> demanded intellectual recognition from everyone. So ambitious was he in this respect that if his mental powers were not given recognition, he would fly into a rage not sparing even his father's friends.[23]

This behavior was quite contrary to social norms which demanded deferential behavior with regard to father and his peers. Narendranath's self-assertion in this context was quite unusual. This desire for self-expression was nurtured by contact with European philosophical and scientific thought. Narendranath acquired a questioning attitude toward society and religion and demanded rational explanations to satisfy his individual judgment.[24] In this frame of mind the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma message of personal freedom and rational reconstruction of society appealed to him. When he became a Brāhma he revolted against the Hindu worship of images as a superstitious custom. He advocated radical social reform, including abolition of caste and the improvement of the position of women. He also adopted Brāhma puritan moral attitudes and frowned on amusements such as the theater as immoral.[25] The Brāhma message that religion should be connected with active work to help mankind appears to have left a deep impression on him.

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[23] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, 17th ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1965), p. 22.

[24] Swami Nikhilananda, Vivekananda: A Biography New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1953), p. 19.

By 1881 Narendranath became restless, and his faith in the *Brāhma* *Samāj* wavered. Readings in Hume's scepticism and John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* led him to question the *Brāhma* arguments for the existence of God on the basis of causality and design.[26] His intellectual doubts were confirmed by a loss of emotional fervor which characterized the *Brāhma* *Samāj* in this period. The *Sādhāraṇ* *Brāhma* *Samāj* was becoming somewhat alienated from society and it had lost the expectation of causing great changes in that society. The movement had begun to lose its buoyancy in the eighties. During this period when he was losing faith in the *Sādhāraṇ* *Brāhma* *Samāj*, Narendranath was still in full revolt against the Hindu social system.[27] His exposure to western learning had thoroughly shaken his faith in traditional values. Caught between two worlds of ideas he had sought a new faith. For a time the *Sādhāraṇ* *Brāhma* *Samāj* had seemed to answer this need but he was ultimately disappointed. According to a college friend, Narendranath underwent considerable agony of spirit after his faith in the *Brāhma* *Samāj* began to waver:

> His first emotional freshness and naivete were worn out. A certain dryness, an incapacity for the prayerful devotions, an ennui which he concealed

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[26]Brajendranath Seal, "Swami Vivekananda," *Prabudda Bharata*, Vol. XII, No. 126 (January, 1907), pp. 11-18.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 14.

> under a nonchalant air of habitual mocking and scoffing, troubled his spirit . . . .
> It was at this time that he came to me . . . opened himself up to me and spoke of his harrassing doubts and his despair of reaching certitude about the Ultimate Reality.[28]

According to Brajendranath Seal, Narendranath adopted a sort of agnostic scepticism after he lost faith in the *Brāhma Samāj*, but this only left him more confused. He wanted a positive faith to overcome his conflicting ideas. He asked *Brāhma* leaders for "an ideal made real to sense, for truth made visible, for a power unto deliverance" but received no satisfying answer.[29]

In the early eighties when Narendranath was searching for a new faith, the cultural nationalist movement in Bengal centering around Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the *Nabajīban* group and the Hindu *Melā* of the Tagores was flourishing. Narendranath read the works of Bankim Chandra eagerly.[30] His family participated in the Hindu *Melā* and Narendranath had been a member of a gymnasium founded by Nabagopal Mitra.[31] Nabagopal Mitra, an *Ādi Brāhma*, questioned the westernizing emphasis of the *Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas* and believed

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[30] Bhupendranath Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

[31] *Life of Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples*, pp. 18-19. (Nabagopal Mitra was a relative on his mother's side.)

that reform could proceed on an indigenous pattern. Vivekananda also attended a series of lectures by the Hindu revivalist, Sashadhar Tarkachuramani in 1883.[32] The idea that the elite should look to their own tradition for inspiration and not just to the West was popular in the eighties, and must have been a factor in Vivekananda's seeking out Ramakrishna.

From their first meeting, Ramakrishna singled out Narendranath for special attention. Narendranath was first drawn to Ramakrishna by personal affection. He had no interest in the Śakta-Vedānta faith of Ramakrishna. He ridiculed the advaita concept of the unity of all in God as immoral and irrational.[33] He still clung to the Brāhma criticism of advaita Vedānta as destructive of morality. He was also contemptuous of the worship of Kālī who represented to him the worst form of Hindu superstition.[34] But when he asked Ramakrishna, "Have you seen God?" and Ramakrishna replied in the affirmative he was fascinated. Here was a man who claimed to have vision of that ultimate

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[32]Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1957), p. 185. Vivekananda attended these lectures in the company of Satish Mukherjee.

[33]Swami Vivekananda, Swami Vivekananda on Himself, p. 41.

[34]Ibid.

Reality for which Vivekananda was seeking.[35] His initial contact with Ramakrishna deepened his internal conflict. According to his own testimony Ramakrishna could induce trance-like states in him. Narendranath described how Ramakrishna first convinced him of the truth of advaita Vedānta:

> One day in the temple at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna touched me over the heart, and first of all I began to see that the houses, rooms, doors, windows, verandahs, the trees, the sun, the moon, all were flying off, shattering to pieces as it were, reduced to atoms and molecules, and ultimately became merged in the Akasha. Gradually again, the Akasha also vanished and after that my consciousness of the ego with it, what happened next I do not recollect . . . .
> The magic touch of the Master that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was stupefied to find there was really nothing in the universe but God! . . . . Thenceforth, I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy.[36]

In 1884 Narendranath's father died suddenly of a heart attack. He had been the sole support of the family and his death caused immediate financial harship. The effort of an aunt to eject Narendranath's family from joint family property led to an expensive law suit which added to their financial difficulties.[37] Narendranath's father had cherished ambitious plans for his eldest son and had thought

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[35]The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 47.

[36]Swami Vivekananda, Swami Vivekananda on Himself, p. 19.

[37]Swami Nikhilananda, op. cit., p. 21.

of sending him to England to continue his education.[38] Narendranath as a child had often dreamed of spectacular fame and success.[39] His father's death put an abrupt end to his hopes and wishes for a satisfying career to absorb his energies. There was very little opportunity to express his personal ambition or idealistic impulses in a society plagued by educated unemployment. His father had been an influential man with influential friends, but Narendranath did not receive any help from them to find a job after his father's death. He experienced hunger and acute disillusionment. He managed to secure some temporary clerical and teaching jobs to support his family.[40] He was faced with the uninspiring prospect of a lifetime to be spent in earning a pittance at some clerical job which was the fate of so many of his generation.

At this time in his life Narendranath was drawn closer to Ramakrishna by his steadfast affection. He began to approach the despised image of Kālī with devotion and experienced a conversion to the worship of the Divine

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[38] Ibid.

[39] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 47.

[40] Swami Vivekananda, Swami Vivekananda on Himself, pp. 30-31, 36.

Mother.[41] Henceforth, he was truly a disciple of Ramakrishna. In many ways his conversion required a submission of his personality as well as the values learned from western education. He had previously believed in cultivation of physical powers and he had a flamboyant love for things of the sense, especially music.[42] To this Ramakrishna opposed the traditional religious ideal of suppression of the senses and physical asceticism. Narendranath had been individualistic, self-assertive, and given to emotional expression while Ramakrishna upheld the traditional religious ideal of serenity, self-control, and passivity. Narendranath was an activist who wanted to do great things in the world while Ramakrishna believed that man must forget his individuality, desires and plans and become an instrument of divine will. At the time of Ramakrishna's death in 1886 Narendranath had accepted him as a Godlike man.[43] Ramakrishna gave him an appreciation for the beauties of his own cultural tradition--the beauties of Hindu religion and philosophy and even the

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[41]<u>The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples</u>, pp. 96-98.

[42]Brajendranath Seal, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 15. Brajendranath Seal described his friend as possessing an "artist's nature and a Bohemian temperatment. His senses were keen and acute, his natural cravings and passions strong and imperious."

[43]<u>The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples</u>, p. 122.

rituals observed by Hindus high and low. Ramakrishna was not of the new English-educated elite and he was closely in touch with the traditional life of the people. He embodied the spiritual insight of the Hindu tradition and reawakened Narendranath's awareness of this tradition.

Narendranath's conversion by Ramakrishna had a lasting impact upon him, but his own spiritual faith and his own mission were not yet crystallized.[44] Following Ramakrishna's death he again went through a period of searching which was not to end until he proclaimed his message in America. The period right after Ramakrishna's death was very difficult, for Narendranath faced considerable pressure to return to his family since he was the eldest son.[45] But he felt that Ramakrishna had left him with a mission although he knew not what the mission was. Just prior to his death Ramakrishna had consented to have ochre robes (symbolic of *sannyāsa* or renunciation of the world) given to his young

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[44] Writers affiliated with or sympathetic to the Ramakrishna Mission generally take the view that Narendranath transmitted the religious insights of Ramakrishna. They do not recognize the divergences in the ideas of the two men and even maintain that Narendranath's later doctrine of social service was implicit in the teachings of Ramakrishna. See *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples*, pp. 107-108, and M. K. Brohi, "Sri Ramakrishna," *Prabuddha Bharata*, No. 66 (May, 1961), pp. 209-216.

[45] *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples*, p. 180.

unmarried disciples. After his death a few of these disciples, including Narendranath, rented an old house in Baranagore, north of Calcutta. Some of the older disciples of Ramakrishna helped the young men with the rent and small sums of money. Narendranath held the group together with his conviction that Ramakrishna had left them a mission as his legacy. They renounced the world and all family ties and yet they were not quite conventional _sannyāsins_. They engaged in study of the Hindu scripture and western philosophy and Narendranath led discussions on the meaning of reality. Intermittently, these young monks left on solitary wanderings seeking realization, but they always returned.[46] The families of the young monks opposed their adoption of the religious life almost as vehemently as they would have opposed conversion to _Brāhmaism_. The families were, of course, concerned because their sons were giving up career and marriage. The people in the neighborhood of the Baranagore house also disapproved of the young _sannyāsins_.[47] This is interesting for they could have no objection to Ramakrishna who had affirmed traditional values, and Hindu society had always sanctioned _sannyāsa_ as the path for the religious man. Although _sannyāsa_ is sometimes thought of as a stage following the fulfilment of duties as a householder,

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[46] Swami Gambhirananda, _op_. _cit_., pp. 43-51.

[47] _Ibid_., p. 46.

society accepted the idea of renunciation early in life for those of exceptional religious temperament. However, for so many English-educated young men to be renouncing the world was rather shocking to society. In a sense the <u>sannyāsa</u> of these young monks was actually a covert form of social rebellion against the oppressive authority of the family. In the Bengali social system the pressure of duty to the family was overwhelming. The family usually chose marriage partners and career, leaving the individual with little choice if he wished to dedicate his life in another way. Narendranath certainly felt family obligations to be an overwhelming obstacle in his search for his life work. He once said:

> The greatest misery of my life has been my own people . . . my brothers and sisters and mother, etc. Relatives are like deadly clogs to one's progress and is it not a wonder that people will still go on to find new ones by marriage.[48]

Thus, his adoption of the traditional <u>sannyāsa</u> expressed rebellion against repressive family obligations,[49] and per-

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[48]Swami Vivekananda, <u>Swami Vivekananda on Himself</u>, pp. 242-243.

[49]When he became a <u>sannyāsin</u>, Vivekananda did not totally abandon his family. He encouraged his disciple, the Maharaja of Khetri, to send money to his mother and brothers when they were in financial straits. See Benoy Shankar Sharma, <u>Swami Vivekananda: a Forgotten Chapter of His Life</u> (Calcutta: Oxford Book and Stationery Co., 1963), pp. 162-174.

haps also against his dim prospects of humdrum life as a clerk in one of the many offices which the English-educated aspired to enter.

The years from 1886 to 1890 were spent with his _gurubhāis_ at Baranagore and in occasional wanderings. Then in 1890 Narendranath became restless and he left his _gurubhāis_ saying he would not return until he realized God. His itinerary for the next three years of wandering included Banares, Allahabad, Delhi, Rajputana, Poona, and Bombay. Then he went south to Bangalore, Madres, and to the southern tip of the continent at Cape Comorin. At Khetri in west India he became the spiritual teacher of the Maharaja. At other times he lived off the alms of the poor. In Madras he attracted a number of followers.[50] Vivekananda's letters attest that his internal struggle was still going on. In 1889 he wrote to a friend in Banares:

> What shall I say to you about the condition of my mind! Oh it were as if hell fire were burning there day and night! Nothing, nothing, could I do as yet! And this life seems muddled away in vain . . . .[51]

During this time Narendranath was concerned with the role of

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[50]Romain Rolland, _The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel_, 5th ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), pp. 22-23.

[51]Swami Vivekananda to Pramada Das Mitra, March 31, 1899, _Letters of Swami Vivekananda_ (Almora: Advaita Ashrama, 1940, 1948), p. 41.

the *sannyāsin* who had renounced worldly ties, in the society around him. He insisted that his *gurubhāis* should study and teach and not retreat into solitary search for God through meditation. And yet during this period Narendranath himself almost became the disciple of a traditional ascetic who lived a life completely devoted to meditation and deplored all activity.[52] Vivekananda's attraction shows how deeply he was drawn to the idea of withdrawal from the world. At the same time he took up intensive study of Hindu scripture in an attempt to understand completely his own culture. His letters attest a particular interest in social structure; he questioned whether caste had always been hereditary in Indian society and what role the masses had played in ancient India.[53] Again, he seems to have been grappling with the problem of the relation between a religious man and the social order. During his wanderings he came into personal contact with the poverty and suffering of the masses all over India. He wrote to a *gurubhāi* that he felt guilty about taking alms from the poor--as a religious man he must have another mission.[54] Through all of this Narendranath

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[52]Swami Vivekananda to Pramada Das Mitra, March 3, 1890, *ibid*., pp. 37-39.

[53]Swami Vivekananda to Pramada Das Mitra, November 19, 1888, *ibid*., pp. 7-12.

[54]*The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples*, p. 261.

was searching for a clue to his own life's work. In 1892 it was first suggested to Vivekananda by an admirer that he should go to America to expound Hinduism to the Chicago Parliament of Religions to be held in 1893. Narendranath was immediately attracted to the idea but there was the problem of money and the lack of an official invitation to attend the conference so he hesitated for several months. The Maharajas of Khetri, Ramnad, and Mysore, and his disciples in Madras helped him with money for the steamship fare.[55] When he set sail for America in 1893 Narendranath was thirty years old. He had settled on the monastic name Vivekananda before his new journey began. Since the age of about sixteen when he had first joined the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj, Vivekananda had undergone a protracted youthful search for the meaning of life. He had adopted the westernization program of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj and then returned to the traditional Hindu religious saint, Ramakrishna. Under the influence of Ramakrishna he had renounced the world and become a sannyāsin. And yet, as he sailed for America he was obsessed with the suffering of the people of India and the responsibility of a man of religion to his society. He was on the verge of formulating a new interpretation of

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[55]Swami Vivekananda to Swami Ramakrishnanda, March 19, 1894, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, 8 vols. Mayavati Memorial Edition (Almora: Advaita Ashrama, n.d.), Vol. VI, pp. 254-255. Hereafter referred to as Complete Works.

Vedānta and the meaning of sannyāsa.

The Development of Swami Vivekananda's Program

According to Vivekananda his main purpose in going to America was to collect funds to help the suffering masses in India. The idea of representing Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament of Religions provided the occasion for making the trip, but it was not the primary consideration. He arrived in America in July, 1893. He knew very little about the country nor did he have any definite plan. He was puzzled at first because religious men in America do not receive alms. But he soon met people and was invited to lecture. His earliest lectures were an appeal for help for the Indian people and a defense of Indian religion and society.[56]

At the Parliament of Religions he created an impression beginning with his opening words "Sisters and brothers of America." He spoke of the unity of all religions and the need for mutual tolerance as each proceed to the same goal. "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."[57]

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[56] Swami Vivekananda, "Reports in American Newspapers," Complete Works, Vol. III, pp. 467-468.

[57] Swami Vivekananda, "Addresses at the Parliament of Religions," Complete Works, Vol. I, p. 24.

He further said that religion is not the crying need of India, the real need is for bread, thus attacking the Christian missionary approach.[58] In another speech he defended image worship because Hindus do not really worship the image but the divine.[59] And he spoke of the core of Hindu religious insight as the recognition of the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for indefinite evolution.[60] In these speeches he touched on some key ideas of his later Vedānta philosophy, but as yet he did not see his mission in the West as the preaching of Vedānta.

After the Parliament Swami Vivekananda was invited to lecture in Chicago and the mid-west and then on the east coast. He abandoned his initial hope of collecting money for the masses and decided to earn the money himself as a lecturer with a prominent lecture bureau. He found America full of prejudices against India and Hinduism due to missionary propaganda. As a secondary goal he set out to interpret and defend Indian culture and religion.[61] In the years 1893 and 1894 while he was working with lecture bureaus in America he

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[58] Ibid., p. 20.

[59] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[60] Ibid., p. 11.

[61] Marie Louise Burke, Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1958), p. 339.

wrote to his disciples in Madras and gurubhāis in Calcutta of various plans to help the masses in India. In these letters he stressed secular education to relieve poverty and ignorance.[62]

In the summer of 1894 he began to express a weariness of lecturing. He wondered whether his lectures were really accomplishing much in America, and thought of return to India.[63] He was beginning to think about a new approach to the American people as he noted genuine interest in Hindu philosophy. At this period Vivekananda conceived the idea that the Vedāntic creed might have a world-wide message. In 1895 beginning with his lectures to the Brooklyn Ethical Society he started to preach Vedānta as the universal religion embracing all religious paths.[64] He began classes

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[62]Swami Vivekananda to Swami Brahmananda, March 19, 1894, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p. 98.

[63]Marie Louise Burke, op. cit., pp. 435, 605.

[64]Some writers have suggested that Ramakrishna himself intended his message to appeal to the modern world, both east and west, and that Vivekananda's preaching Vedānta was a fulfilment of Ramakrishna's purpose. According to Swami Gambhirananda, "Sri Ramakrishna is the first great teacher to deliver a dual message, consciously addressed to the East and to the West as two separate though interrelated cultures. Vivekananda carried that message to America and Europe . . . ." (Swami Gambhirananda, op. cit., p. x). There is no evidence that Ramakrishna was consciously preaching to the west, and such an interpretation ignores the period of development of Vivekananda's personality and ideas following Ramakrishna's death.

in yoga and meditation in New York and completely gave up the scheme of earning money through lecturing.[65] In October 1895 he went to England to deliver lectures and classes. When he returned to America he lectured on the philosophy of Vedānta to the graduate students of Havard and created a Vedānta society in New York. He attracted many disciples in both England and America who later came to try to help him work in India.[66] In 1895, the year he began preaching Vedānta in America and England, Vivekananda's letters indicate that his plans for work in India also changed. Previously, he had written only of spreading secular knowledge of science, agriculture, etc., to the masses in India. But while he was preaching that Vedānta teaches that man is divine with infinite potentialities in the West, he came to the conclusion that Vedānta could also have a message for India.[67] From 1895, his letters refer to the need for both

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[65] Swami Vivekananda to Mrs. Ole Bull, December 8, 1895, Complete Works, Vol. VI, p. 352.

[66] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, pp. 371-379, 389-391.

[67] Marie Louise Burke, op. cit., pp. 331-337, 565. Burke was the first to point out that Vivekananda did not immediately begin to preach Vedānta upon his arrival in the West. His exposition of Vedānta was gradually developed from the beginning of 1895. However, she does not draw the logical conclusion that Vivekananda's version of Vedānta had not been fully worked out while he was in India. She hesitates to draw the conclusion that Vivekananda's Vedānta had new elements and was more than a restatement of the insights of Ramakrishna.

religious and secular education for the masses in India. Furthermore, he had come to the conclusion that singlehanded he could not raise sufficient money for a huge project to educate the masses. After he gave up the idea of lecturing to earn money he decided that his educational plans must wait until he had built up an organization in India.[68] In April 1896 he wrote to his gurubhāis in Bengal that they should establish a monastic organization to spread Vedānta doctrine as well as secular education among the masses.[69]

Swami Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 after going to London and spending some time in continental Europe. He arrived in Colombo, Ceylon on the fifteenth of January, where he was greeted with a large reception. He then traveled through South India, visited Calcutta, and later embarked on a trip through northern India to Almora, Panjab, Kashmir, and Rajputana. The period from January to December, 1897 was mainly taken up by this lecture tour from one end of India to the other.[70] Vivekananda's defense of Indian culture and Hindu religion in the West appealed to

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[68] Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga Perumal, January 12, 1895, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p. 197.

[69] Swami Vivekananda to gurubhāis, April 27, 1896, Complete Works, Vol. VII, pp. 488-494.

[70] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, pp. 444-478.

nationalist sentiments in India.[71] He was recognized as a public figure by the educated elite and huge receptions were held in his honor in Calcutta and Madras.[72]

There were several persistent themes which ran through Vivekananda's lectures in the year 1897 in India. One theme was the spiritual greatness of India. According to Vivekananda the inner core of Indian culture has always been spirituality; even now the peasant of India often has more philosophical insight than the philosopher of the West.[73] He rejected the notion that India's excessive concern with spirituality had led to her downfall. According to Vivekananda each nation has a center of vitality; in India, politics, science, and society are all centered on religion.[74] Vivekananda said that India should attempt to recover her own spiritual insight rather than attempting to

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[71]The official biography of Swami Vivekananda claims that his speech at the Chicago Parliament of Religions elicited immediate response in India. (Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 323.) His own letters prove that if this was so he was unaware of it. Prior to the meeting held in his honor in Calcutta at the end of 1894, he complained that lack of expressions of support from India were exposing him to charges of charlatanism in America. (Swami Vivekananda to Haridas Desai, June 20, 1894, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p. 104.)

[72]Indian Mirror, February 29, 1897. See also Swami Vivekananda to Mary Hale, January 30, 1897, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p. 360.

[73]Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, 7th ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1967), p. 46.

[74]Ibid., p. 118.

imitate the materialistic civilization of the West. The recovery of the spiritual center of Indian civilization will release India from stagnation and lead to creative initiative in all spheres of life.[75] To recover her own spiritual insight India must come out of her shell and become aggressive; India should preach a spiritual message to the world for the good of all mankind. If India could recover her own strength and self-confidence she would also be in a better position to assimilate whatever the West has to offer, according to Vivekananda.[76]

Vivekananda also talked frequently about the necessity for the revival of the eternal principles of the Hindu religion. Although he had often cast himself in the role of defender of the entirety of Hindu religion, in these lectures he made a distinction between the eternal principles and the minor rules of the Purāṇas and Smṛtis, which should be subject to change.[77] According to Vivekananda, Hindus have become too involved in the minor regulations of food and drink and have forgotten the major truths of their spiritual heritage.[78] The peoples of India should remember the core message of the Upaniṣads that man has divinity within him. Once

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[75] Ibid., p. 51.

[76] Ibid., pp. 170-171.

[77] Ibid., pp. 9-19.

[78] Ibid., p. 68.

men realize that God and the human soul are one, they will be able to realize their own potentialities and become creative. Revival of this ancient principle of the *Vedānta* can make Hinduism once again dynamic.[79] He also deplored the excessive devotionalism of modern Hinduism. He proclaimed that too much dualistic *bhakti* had weakened India and the country requires a religion of strength which only the impersonal *Vedānta* can give:

> Ay, I know what grandeur, what oceans of love, what infinite, ecstatic blessings and joy there are in the dualistic love theories of worship and religion. I know it all. But this is not the time with us to weep even in joy, we have had weeping enough; no more is the time for us to become soft. This softness has been with us till we have become masses of cotton and are dead. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which none can resist.[80]

Vivekananda believed that only the message of *Vedānta* can recreate the belief of Indians in themselves.

Vivekananda also frequently spoke of religion as the root of growth and development in India.[81] He believed that political, social and economic development would grow naturally out of religious reform. Once the religious center of India's culture was reawakened, creativity in all other areas of life would naturally follow. He dismissed social

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[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 274, 281.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

reformers of the Brāhma type by saying that their reforms are only applicable to the upper castes, a small minority of the Indian population.[82] Moreover, he believed that the denunciation of Indian society by the social reformers was harmful because it destroyed self-confidence and self-esteem which are necessary for growth and development as individuals or as a nation. The basic difference between Indians and Englishmen is only that the English have faith in themselves while the Indians do not.[83] Although Vivekananda attacked the approach of the Brāhma Samāj, he expressed personal support for many of the reforms they advocated. He agreed with their position against early marriage,[84] and he supported education for women.[85] He also voiced objections to caste privileges,[86] but he felt that constant harping upon these weaknesses of Indian society led to stagnation rather than growth. Social reformers should try to awaken the masses and let them determine their own line of progress.[87]

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[82] Ibid., pp. 111-117.

[83] Ibid., p. 122.

[84] Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, Talks with Swami Vivekananda: From the Diary of a Disciple (Almora: Advaita Ashram, 1946), p. 104.

[85] Swami Vivekananda, "Our Indian Women: Their Past, Present, and Future," Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. III, No. 5, (December, 1898), p. 75.

[86] Swami Vivekananda, "Vedanta and Privilege," Complete Works, Vol. I, pp. 423-424.

[87] Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p. 122.

Vivekananda believed that the key to this awakening was the spread of the _Vedānta_ religion of strength.

On May 1, 1897, Vivekananda called a meeting near Calcutta of his _gurubhāis_ and followers and announced his plan of setting up a monastic organization to train men to spread _Vedānta_ religion and practical knowledge among the people.[88] Resolutions were passed and Vivekananda was elected the general president of the new organization, called the Ramakrishna Mission.[89] Members of the new organization first became engaged in famine and plague relief. The journals _Prabuddha Bharata_ (Awakened India) in English and the _Udbodhan_ (Awakening) in Bengali were started. The Mission also made progress in setting up medical dispensaries and schools.[90] By the time Vivekananda left for America for the second time in 1899 he had established his new monastic order for social service on firm foundations. In 1898 he had drawn up a series of guidelines for the new monks. These rules included a statement of his fundamental program:

> This Math is established to work out one's own liberation, and to train oneself to do good in the world in every way . . . .
>
> The first and foremost task in India is the propagation of education and spirituality among the masses.
>
> The Math will not pay much attention to social

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[88] Swami Gambhirananda, _op. cit._, p. 150.

[89] _Ibid._

[90] _Ibid._, pp. 120-124, 128.

> reform . . . instead of wasting its energy on the trumpeting of social evils, it should be the aim of this Math to nourish the social body.
>
> Material improvement, education, social reform and every thing must be introducing through religion.[91]

Vivekananda believed that the key to progress was the development of the religious thought and institutions of India. Like Bankim Chandra he believed that progress must proceed from an indigenous base. He was not against the West--he admired western society and believed that India must adopt western organizational techniques.[92] But the framework for Indian development must come from within the Indian heritage. Thus, he was against the westernization program of progress. His effort was directed toward the revelation of new dimensions for indigenous thought and institutions. His greatest contribution was the reinterpretation of Vedānta and the religious institution of sannyāsa to support a program of activist social service.

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[91] Ibid., pp. 133-137. When Vivekananda attacked the idea of social reform he was referring to the efforts of Brāhmas and others to bring about specific changes to correct the "evils" of Hindu society. He believed that attacking social evils of Indian society was destructive because it undermined self-confidence, and he suggested that the spread of education, and religious and scientific knowledge, would result in the natural improvement of Indian society. He advocated social service which would not aim at specific reforms, but rather would help Indians stand on their own feet and decide which direction their society would take.

[92] Swami Vivekananda, "The East and the West," Udbodhan (1900) as translated in Complete Works, Vol. V, p. 469.

Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta

Vivekananda believed that Vedānta is a universal religion capable of uniting all religious thought. He viewed dualism, and qualified non-dualism and unqualified non-dualism as non-contradictory stages in the religious life of man. Advaita Vedānta (unqualified non-dualism) was simply the highest stage.[93] He said that the path of devotion (bhakti) must begin with a supposition that the soul and God are separate and that reality is dual. But the devotee in the final stage of love for God will realize his union with Him.[94] All religions are but variations on the basic concept "not me, but Thou," or the elimination of egoism and realization of unity. The ultimate spiritual basis for the universal religion of man is the non-dualist concept of unity. According to Vivekananda, scientific thought was also moving toward discovery of the universal principle of reality. He believed Vedānta to be a rational religion which could become a suitable basis for scientific thought.[95] Vivekananda conceived of Vedānta as the spiritual gift of India to humanity. He also believed that understanding of the true

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[93] Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga Perumal, May 6, 1895, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, pp. 222-223.

[94] Swami Vivekananda, "Para Bhakti," Complete Works, Vol. III, p. 100.

[95] Swami Vivekananda, "Practical Vedanta, Part III," Complete Works, Vol. II, pp. 328-340.

principles of Vedānta could regenerate India.

Although Vivekananda proclaimed Vedānta as a universal religion he also advocated specific metaphysical and ethical views. Vivekananda's metaphysical position was similar to that of his guru, Ramakrishna. He believed that reality is ultimately one and multiplicity is ultimately an appearance. He explained:

> When one is in ignorance, he sees the phenomenon and does not see God. When he sees God, this universe vanishes entirely for him. Ignorance or Maya, as it is called, is the cause of all this phenomenon--the Absolute, the Unchangeable, being taken as this manifested universe.[96]

Vivekananda identified the goddess Kālī with the force of māyā, the creator and destroyer of the universe. But he did not conceive of Kālī as separate from the Absolute, for māyā and the absolute are ultimately one.[97] Vivekananda denied the individual reality of the soul. The soul is real and immortal only as part of the whole. According to Vivekananda our real individuality is the infinite "but the difficulty is, we desire so much to be immortal as parts of the whole."[98] Several writers have called Vivekananda's theology "concrete monism" to distinguish it from the absol-

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[96]Swami Vivekananda, "The Vedanta Philosophy," Complete Works, Vol. I, p. 363.

[97]Ibid., pp. 363-364.

[98]Swami Vivekananda, "Practical Vedanta, Part IV," Complete Works, Vol. II, p. 346.

ute *advaita Vedānta* of Śaṁkara.[99] This seems to be a distinction without a difference. "Concrete monism" presumably implies a monism which upholds the absolute reality of the universe and the soul. Vivekananda believed the created universe and the human soul to be ultimately illusory as independent entities. His metaphysical position is not significantly different from that of the great exponent of *advaita Vedānta*, Śaṁkara. He upheld the *advaita Vedānta* tradition which has always been the most influential metaphysical tradition among the Hindu elite in Bengal.

Vivekananda also accepted the traditional Hindu cyclical cosmology. He regarded *māyā* and the universe as a never-ending process of evolution and involution without beginning or end.[100] The impression given by his writings as a whole is that he believed in progress only in the short run as part of the cycle of creation and destruction, involution and evolution. He told a group of disciples in America:

> In time to come Christs will be in numbers like bunches of grapes on a vine, then the play will be over and will pass out--as water in a kettle beginning to boil shows first one bubble, then another, then more and more, until all is ebullition, and passes out as steam. Buddha and Christ are the two biggest "bubbles" the world has yet produced . . . . Sometime, however,

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[99]See R. C. Majumdar, *Swami Vivekananda: An Historical Review* (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers Private Ltd., 1963), pp. 107-108.

[100]Swami Vivekananda, "The Cosmos," *Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 208.

> all will be bubbles and escape; but creation, ever new, will bring new water to go through the process all over again.[101]

In this quote he said that once perfection is achieved the cycle will start all over again. At other times he seemed to doubt that progress is possible even in the short run cycle. He told a disciple, "Things do not grow better. They remain as they are, and we grow better by the changes we make in them."[102]

Vivekananda believed that realization of unity with the One Reality is the ultimate aim of human existence, but this realization does not mean a negation of life and action or that the world becomes meaningless. Once the unity of all is realised man may still live and act in the world of multiplicity but he will no longer be deceived by the appearance of things as independent entities. His sense of alienation, the root of all misery, will be overcome.[103] Although Vivekananda had adopted the advaita Vedānta metaphysic of the Śakta sect, his interpretation of the significance of the non-dualist metaphysical outlook for the religious life of man was significantly different. According to the Vedānta

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[101] Swami Vivekananda, "Inspired Talks," Complete Works, Vol. VII, pp. 7-8.

[102] Swami Vivekananda, "Sayings and Utterances," Complete Works, Vol. VIII, p. 262.

[103] Swami Vivekananda, "The Vedanta Philosophy," Complete Works, Vol. I, p. 365.

viewpoint, the ultimate goal of human existence is union with the One Reality and the barrier to the achievement of this realisation is egoism. The traditional method of overcoming the sense of self was withdrawal from the world, meaning withdrawal of the senses and the mind from all worldly attachments. The destruction of attachments would eventually lead to destruction of all sense of egoism and realisation of unity with reality. Vivekananda accepted the ultimate goal of selfless union but he proposed a new approach which he called "practical Vedānta." The first postulate of practical Vedānta was that if all is One, all human souls are God. In human life the best way of overcoming the sense of ego is in selfless work for the good of humanity. Work for the service of man is a mode of worshipping God as the sum total of all human souls. The idea of renunciation is not given up in Vivekananda's philosophy. The man seeking for realization must renounce worldly ties, but this renunciation is no longer withdrawal from society. It is renunciation of the ego rather than the world. Vivekananda suggested that renunciation can best be achieved by selfless work in the service of humanity.[104]

Vivekananda's doctrine of renunciation for the sake of social service gave new meaning to the Hindu institution

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[104] Swami Vivekananda, "Practical Vedanta, Part I," Complete Works, Vol. II, pp. 291-306.

of *sannyāsa*. The *Brāhmas* had rejected the Hindu *sannyāsa* tradition. But Vivekananda believed that the respect of the Indian masses for those who have renounced the world has a potential for good.[105] When he organized the Ramakrishna Mission as a society of monks devoted to social service he interpreted *sannyāsa* as renunciation for the sake of service of others rather than for a solitary search for God. He recognized a distinction between the ideal and ordinary religious life. The ideal life of *sannyāsa* required renunciation of all personal ties and material desires. But the religious life for *sannyāsin* and laymen were the same--work for the good of humanity. The complete renunciation of the *sannyāsin* freed him for more intense devotion to active service. In India *sannyāsa* had always been somewhat of an escape valve for the individual who wished to escape from the social system. The Indian social order emphasized obligations to family and kin. To an idealistic young person family obligations and the necessity for obedience to elders in the family, often put a curb on his ideals and his creative ideas. *Sannyāsa* gave freedom from this powerful network of obligations which often immobilized individual effort. Previously, *sannyāsa* had provided an escape from society to pursue a lonely search for God. In a new context

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[105]Swami Vivekananda, "My Life and Mission," *Complete Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 90.

it could also provide a means for the individual who wanted to devote himself to a cause such as service of humanity or the nation. Vivekananda created a new concept of sannyāsa as an institutional focus of social activism.

The Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas and even the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas had rejected advaita Vedānta as destructive of activist ethics. The basic assumption on which the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma conception of ethics rests is that the goal of man is harmony with the will of God. For this reason Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, who were dualists or qualified non-dualists, insisted that God and the soul must to some degree be independent entities or the search to attune the human soul with God is meaningless. They, along with the Christian missionaries, attacked unqualified non-dualist philosophy as undermining ethics. Vivekananda challenged the idea that advaita Vedānta is not conducive to morality. On the contrary, he asserted that a non-dualist metaphysic is the only rational basis of morality.[106] According to Vivekananda, the reliance of dualists on revealed scripture or intuitional grasp of the will of a personal God to provide a foundation for ethical behavior is irrational and even superstitious. The only rational basis of ethics is in the conception of all reality as One. All religions have recognised the basic principle of ethics

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[106] Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p. 322.

but they have not succeeded in giving a rational reason for ethical action except to say it is the will of God. Monism provides the answer according to Vivekananda. Man should do good to his neighbor because his neighbor is himself.[107]

Vivekananda, like Bankim Chandra, was fundamentally concerned with moral regeneration or character building. He loved India as a nation but he thought of her regeneration in terms of building strength of character in individuals. He was always saying if only he could find one hundred enthusiastic, dedicated, courageous young men he could revolutionise India and the world.[108] Like Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda believed that the spiritual or moral character of man was related to the total development of the individual, mental, and physical as well as moral. He advised his young followers to develop strength of mind and body through physical and mental exercise. It was in this spirit that he proclaimed, "You will be nearer to God through football than the Bhagavad Gita."[109] He was against the type of asceticism which involved extreme physical deprivation and weakening of physical strength. According to Vivekananda the core of his message was that the only true religion is

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[107]Swami Vivekananda, "Vedanta as a Factor in Civilization," Complete Works, Vol. I, pp. 384-385.

[108]Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, pp. 121-122.

[109]Swami Nikhilananda, op. cit., p. 167.

the religion of strength.[110] He believed that the Vedānta doctrine of the divinity within each individual could restore the feeling of strength in the individual, and encourage activist resistance to evil. He was concerned that the Hindu tradition of withdrawal from the world had led to a tradition of ahiṃsa (non-injury) which he equated with non-resistance. He believed that non-resistance may be a virtue in a sage who has the ability to strike his enemies and yet forgives them. But for many the doctrine of ahiṃsa is merely a cloak for fear. Vivekananda believed that Indians must develop a spirit of rajas (activity) like people in the West.[111] According to Vivekananda, "Inactivity should be avoided by all means. Activity always means resistance. Resist all evils, mental and physical, and when you have succeeded in resisting, then will calmness come."[112] Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta was an activist doctrine of strength and resistance.

Vivekananda's concept of ethics as derived from the realisation of oneness transcended the particularistic code of duties of traditional Hinduism. He believed that the individual must use his own judgment in applying the univer-

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[110] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 596.

[111] Swami Vivekananda, "East and West," Udbodham, as translated from the Bengali in Complete Works, Vol. V, pp. 451-463.

[112] Swami Vivekananda, "Karmayoga," Complete Works, Vol. I, p. 40.

al ethical principle of love and oneness with all human souls.[113] He saw the code of particularistic duties toward family and kin as a possible form of slavery which could veil egotism and attachment.[114] He believed that Hinduism must rid itself of the concept of duty, and excessive emphasis on ceremonies and rituals, and all particularistic forms of worship except the worship of God in humanity.[115] Vivekananda also deduced certain social conclusions from his belief that all human beings are potentially divine. He thought that in essence all human beings are equal because the divine is within every one, although in some the divine may not be manifest. Even if perfect equality is a dream, the person who believes in the divinity of man must work for a society without privilege.[116] Vivekananda noted that in history whenever privilege has been broken down, progress was more rapid, as in the Buddhist period in India.[117] Vivekananda was interested in socialist doctrine because it

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[113] Ibid., p. 110.

[114] Ibid., p. 104.

[115] Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, pp. 39-40.

[116] Swami Vivekananda, "Vedanta and Privilege," Complete Works, Vol. I, pp. 423-424.

[117] Swami Vivekananda, "Privilege," Complete Works, Vol. I, p. 426.

was a theory of the creation of society without privilege.[118] His basic ethical precepts were against caste and the hierarchical nature of the India social system. However, he refused to attack caste because he believed that the Hindu social system had suffered from too much criticism which had undermined the confidence of Hindus in their own capabilities.

Vivekananda's metaphysical doctrines were identical with traditional Śakta-Vedānta thought. It is in his interpretation of the meaning of non-dualist metaphysics for human ethical conduct that his Neo-Vedānta was original. Vivekananda called his religious ideology "practical Vedanta" which shows a consciousness that he had created a new ethical interpretation of Vedānta. His ethical outlook was very similar to that of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas and the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas. Active service within society for the good of one's fellow man is the spirit of Neo-Vedānta religious ideology. But Vivekananda interwove this reformist ethical outlook with the traditional metaphysical outlook of the elite of Bengal. Vivekananda's contribution to religious reform was the reinterpretation of Vedānta as conducive to social activism, and the reinterpretation of sannyāsa as the institutional focus of social activism.

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[118] Santana Das Gupta, "Socialism and Swami Vivekananda," Udbodhan, Vol. 64, No. 9 (1962), p. 523.

This reinterpretation was not accomplished without considerable inner struggle. Vivekananda was deeply drawn to Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of all the virtues of the traditional Hindu saint. He had adopted Ramakrishna's Sakta-Vedānta but had transformed it into a religious ideology conducive to an activist ethic. Even after he had formulated his Neo-Vedānta faith, he was intermittently assailed with doubts about his new interpretation. While he was touring upper India in late 1897 he wondered whether his work and activity were not all a form of egotism--as if he had the power to change the world. He felt the desire to surrender himself to the divine will of Kālī, the Mother, to let go his self-assertion and become a passive vehicle of Her will.[119] When his gurubhāis questioned his new religious ideals he confessed that he was also nostalgic for the old life of quiet meditation and devotion, but he had a mission that would give him no peace.[120] While in America in 1900 he again expressed his doubts about his religious ideology of social activism in a letter to a friend:

> Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my guidance the thirst for power. Now they vanish and I drift. I come Mother . . . in Thy warm bosom . . . floating wheresoever Thou

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[119] Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1946), p. 432.

[120] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, pp. 508-509.

> takest me . . . in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator, no more an actor![121]

His own inner struggle with conflicting ideals was accentuated by the difficulties he encountered in conveying his message to his countrymen. His gurubhāis and his disciples only slowly gave up their traditional ideals. He was never able to band together a hundred energetic young men to regenerate his country. He experienced periods of depression toward the close of his life.[122] But in spite of doubts expressed in letters and conversations with close associates, in his public work and lectures he was true to his concept of practical activist Vedānta until his death in 1902. Margaret Noble, an English disciple, called Sister Nivedita, came closest to understanding his agony of spirit. She wrote that Vivekananda had created a new ideal in Hinduism by hallowing the concept of work. He made work in the service of man equal to worship of God in burning out the selfishness that prevents religious realisation. In Nivedita's words:

> Thus he hallowed the act of aid, and hallowed, too, the name of man . . . . But it was inevitable that he himself should from time to time go through the anguish of revolt. The Hindu ideal of the rel-

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[121] Swami Vivekananda to Miss MacLeod, April 18, 1900, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p. 499.

[122] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 629.

> igious life, as a reflection on earth of that of the great God in the Divine Empyrean--the Unmoving, the Untouched, "pure, free, ever the Witness,"--is so clear and so deeply established that only at great cost to himself could a man carry it into a fresh channel. Has any one realized the pain endured by a sculptor of a new ideal?[123]

The Ramakrishna Mission Movement

Swami Vivekananda sought to give expression to his new ideal with the creation of the Ramakrishna Mission movement. The Ramakrishna Mission was an organized attempt to channel the renunciation of sannyāsins toward social service and to realize the Neo-Vedānta ideal of work for humanity in practice. The Ramakrishna Mission organization was set up in May, 1897. Its purposes were the teaching of Vedānta and arts and industries, and the training of sannyāsins to devote their lives to others. The membership was open to both monks and householders, but in actuality most of the membership was drawn from Vivekananda's gurubhāis, the monastic disciples of Ramakrishna.[124] In December, 1898, the Belur Maṭh (monastery) was consecrated as the center for the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission. This Ramakrishna Maṭh was theoretically semi-autonomous as an exclusively monastic organization headed by a Board of Trustees. However, the same persons tended to preside over the Ramakrishna Mission

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[123]Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him, pp. 45-46.

[124]Swami Gambhirananda, op. cit., pp. 114-120.

executive and the Ramakrishna *Maṭh* board of trustees.[125] The Ramakrishna *Maṭh* and Mission were organized on the English pattern which was widely accepted in Bengali elite culture. Vivekananda's *gurbhāis* had resisted the idea of a formal organization thinking it would destroy the religious spirit.[126] But Vivekananda insisted that it would be impossible to accomplish any lasting work without adopting western forms of organization.[127] Membership in the Ramakrishna Mission was open to both monks and laymen who had the right to vote at general meetings. The members of the executive committee were elected by the membership, and the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer had to be monastic members. A formal constitution was adopted in 1909 which regularized these rules.[128] The informal organization of the Ramakrishna *Maṭh* and Mission retained some traditional elements. Each novice *sannyāsin* was guided by a particular *guru* and was recognized as his disciple.[129]

In the first decade of the existence of the Ramakrishna *Maṭh* and Mission organization its membership consis-

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[125] *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 183, 193.

[126] Swami Nikhilananda, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

[127] Swami Vivekananda to Swami Brahmananda, 1894, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 66.

[128] Swami Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, pp. 184, 120-121.

[129] *Ibid.*, pp. 116-118.

ted primarily of Vivekananda's gurubhāis and his own direct disciples.[130] Ramakrishna had fifteen young monastic disciples who had joined Vivekananda at the Baranagore house after Ramakrishna died to take the vow of renunciation. They had given up family ties and had embarked on a life of study, meditation, and solitary wanderings to seek God. Ramakrishna had created a belief in the destiny of Vivekananda and he naturally assumed leadership after Ramakrishna's death.[131] His journey to the West strengthened his position, and on his return to India his gurubhāis formed a ready-made following. To this core, Vivekananda added about twenty of his own disciples.[132] Almost all of Vivekananda's monastic disciples were Bengalis. Vivekananda gurubhāis and disciples who formed the large majority of the membership of the Ramakrishna Mission in the first decade, were drawn from a social strata similar to his own.

Tables 12 and 13 give the names, monastic names, caste, education, and regional affiliation of the gurubhāis of Vivekananda and fourteen of his monastic disciples.

From these two tables it can be seen that the gurubhāis and disciples were mostly drawn from the Brāhmaṇ, Vaidya, and Kāyastha castes of Bengal. Among the gurubhāis,

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[130] Ibid., p. 120.

[131] Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him, pp. 85-86.

[132] Swami Gambhirananda, op. cit., pp. 116-118.

Table 12

The Names, Monastic Names, Caste, Educational Qualifications, and Regional Affiliation of Ramakrishna's Monastic Disciples (Vivekananda's *gurubhāis*)

Name	Monastic Name	Caste	Education	Region
1. Sarat Chandra Chakravarty	Saradananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, F.A.*	Hooghly (Calcutta suburb)
2. Sasi Bhushan Chakravarty	Ramakrishnananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, college entrance**	Hooghly
3. Kali Prasad Chandra	Abhedananda	Kāyastha	English medium, college entrance	Calcutta
4. Harinath Chattopadhyay	Turiyananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, civil engineering degree	Calcutta
5. Hariprasanna Chattopadhyay	Vijnananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, high school	Belgharia (Calcutta suburb)
6. Jogindra Nath Choudhury	Yogananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, high school	Dakshineswar (Calcutta suburb)
7. Gangadhar Gangopadhyay	Akhandananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, high school	Calcutta
8. Baburam Ghosh	Premananda	Kāyastha	English medium, high school	Hooghly

Table 12 (Continued)

The Names, Monastic Names, Caste, Educational Qualifications, and Regional Affiliation of Ramakrishna's Monastic Disciples (Vivekananda's *gurubhāis*)

Name	Monastic Name	Caste	Education	Region
9. Nitya Niranjan Ghosh	Niranjananda	Kāyastha	English medium, high school	Calcutta
10. Rakhal Chandra Ghosh	Brahmananda	Kāyastha	English medium, college entrance	24 parganas and Calcutta
11. Subodh Chandra Ghosh	Subodhananda	Kāyastha	English medium, high school	Calcutta
12. Tarak Nath Ghoshal	Shivananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, high school	24 parganas
13. Sarada Prosanna Mitra	Trigunatita-nanda	Kāyastha	English medium, F.A.	24 parganas
14. Rakturam	Adbutananda	Lower caste	None	Bihar

Source: *The Disciples of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1943).

* Passed First Arts examination after two years of college
** Passed college entrance examination

Table 13

The Names, Monastic Names, Caste, Educational Qualifications, and Regional Affiliation of Thirteen of Vivekananda's Monastic Disciples

Name	Monastic Name	Caste	Education	Region
1. Ajayhari Banerji	Swarupananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, started college	Calcutta
2. Kali Krishna Bose	Virajananda	Kāyastha	English medium, college entrance	Calcutta
3. Sudhir Chandra Chakravarty	Shuddhananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, F.A.	Calcutta
4. Sushil Chandra Chakravarty	Prakashananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, F.A.	Calcutta
5. Haripada Chatterji	Bodhananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, B.A.	Howrah (Calcutta suburb)
6. Khagendranath Chatterji	Vimalananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, F.A.	Howrah
7. Charuchandra Das	Shubhananda	Vaidya	English medium, started college	Calcutta
8. Dakshina Ranjan Guha	Kalyananda	Kāyastha	English medium, college entrance	Barisal (East Bengal)
9. Suresh Chandra Guha-Thakurta	Paramananda	Kāyastha	English medium, high school	Barisal

Table 13 (Continued)

The Names, Monastic Names, Caste, Educational Qualifications, and Regional Affiliation of Thirteen of Vivekananda's Monastic Disciples

Name	Monastic Name	Caste	Education	Region
10. Sarat Chandra Gupta	Sadananda	Vaidya	Vernacular education	Banares (Bengali origin)
11. Kedar Nath Maulik	Achalananda	Unknown	English medium, high school	Banares
12. Suraj Rao	Nischayananda	Kṣatriya (Maratha)	Vernacular education	Maharashtra
13. Govindra Chandra Shukul	Atmananda	Brāhmaṇ	English medium, F.A.	Maldah (North Bengal)

Source: Swami Abjananda, Svāmījīr Padaprānte [At the Feet of the Master] (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1966).

only Rakturam was from a lower caste of Bihar, and among the disciples, Suraj Rao was from Mahrashtra. All of his Bengali followers, with the possible exception of Kedar Nath Maulik, were from the three upper castes. Moreover, most of them had an English education at least through high school. Seven out of fourteen gurubhāis had passed the university entrance exam and nine out of thirteen disciples had passed the university entrance examination. As a whole, Vivekananda's followers had been exposed to western education. The only one among his gurubhāis who refused to participate in the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission was Rakturam, the illiterate disciple of Ramakrishna from Bihar. The reasons he gave are illuminating. He said that he could not leave the life of meditation and devotion, and, moreover, he felt out of place with Vivekananda's highbrow acquaintances.[133] This underlines the fact that Vivekananda's movement, like the Brāhma Samāj, was dominated by the Bengali elite. Indeed, five of his gurubhāis, other than Vivekananda, had been attracted to the Brāhma Samāj prior to their conversion by Ramakrishna.[134] Furthermore, Vivekananda's following was mostly drawn from Calcutta, its suburbs and the adjoining

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[133] Disciples of Ramakrishna, pp. 240-241.

[134] The five were Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, Sasi Bhushan Chakravarty, Kali Prasad Chandra, Rakhal Chandra Ghosh, and Tarak Nath Ghoshal. Ibid., pp. 349-350.

district of 24 parganas. Among his disciples there were two from the east Bengal town of Barisal showing that the movement was beginning to spread to east Bengal. In 1899 a Vedānta Society was established in Dacca. After Vivekananda's death a Vedānta Society was also established in the district town of Barisal (1904), and the Dacca center was expanded.[135] There were also two Vedānta societies organized in Calcutta.[136] Vivekananda attracted a small following in Banaras, chiefly among Bengalis settled there. He had a following in Madras, but only one Madrasi became a monastic disciple.[137] They did not play a very important role in the movement after the Prabuddha Bharata Press was moved from Madras in 1898. The Ramakrishna Mission movement in its first decade was very much centered in Calcutta with some following in small urban centers of east Bengal, and its membership was almost entirely drawn from the elite.

It is interesting to note that recruitment to the Ramakrishna Mission was mainly through personal contact. For instance, five of Vivekananda's disciples had attended Ripon College where they had come into contact with Mahendranath, the biographer of Ramakrishna, who was a professor

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[135] Swami Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-173.

[136] *Prabuddha Bharata*, Vol. IX, No. 91 (February, 1904), p. 35.

[137] Swami Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

at this college. He encouraged these young people to visit Vivekananda's *gurubhāis*, and when Vivekananda returned from the West they visited him. Others were acquainted or related to various of Vivekananda's *gurubhāis*. Only the two young men from Barisal were drawn to join the Ramakrishna Mission through reading about Vivekananda and Ramakrishna. These two young men journeyed to Calcutta without prior contact with the purpose of becoming disciples of Vivekananda and joining the Ramakrishna Mission.[138] Vivekananda had hoped that volunteers enthusiastic about his mission would come to him spontaneously, but this did not occur very frequently.

Vivekananda had considerable difficulty in persuading his followers that religion should be made practical in social service. His *gurubhāis* were initially reluctant to give up the life of devotion and dedication. While Vivekananda was in America he wrote repeatedly of the need to organize but he did not get much response from his *gurbhāis*.[139] However, when he returned and organized the Ramakrishna Mission all but Rakturam actively participated in social service programs. Only once did a *gurubhāi* openly question Vivekananda.[140] Vivekananda was able to obtain their sup-

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[138] Swami Abjajnanda, *op*. *cit*., pp. 215-216, 318-320.

[139] Swami Gambhirananda, *op*. *cit*., pp. 103-110.

[140] *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples*, p. 510.

port for two reasons. First, they believed that he was chosen by Ramakrishna for a special destiny. Secondly, they were western-educated and most of them had been brought up in the urban society of Calcutta. They were familiar with the concept of religion as social service through their western education and for some of them, through the Brāhma Samāj. Surprisingly, Vivekananda also had some difficulties in persuading his direct disciples to follow his activist practical Vedānta program. Many of them were more attracted by a belief in the special spiritual character of Vivekananda than by dedication to his mission. There were a few who insisted on retiring to solitary meditation for months at a time.[141] However, the direct disciples of Vivekananda without exception held true to his ideal of service to God through service to man after his death. All of them took an active part in the social service activities of the Ramakrishna Mission during his lifetime and later. Vivekananda often expressed disappointment with his direct disciples. He complained that he wanted dynamic and spirited young men and that he was not getting men of real mettle for his mission.[142] This seems puzzling because all his direct disciples did contribute to the

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[141] Swami Abjajnanda, op. cit., pp. 129, 246.

[142] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 629.

Ramakrishna Mission program of social service. They preached Vedānta, worked for famine and plague relief and established schools and dispensaries.[143] Actually, Vivekananda's disappointment was due to the extent of his dream. He wanted to establish something more than a religious society devoted to social service; he wanted to stimulate a new life in India.

When the Ramakrishna Mission was first established in 1897 it had three declared aims: (1) to train men to teach knowledge conducive for the material and spiritual welfare of the masses, (2) to encourage arts and industries, and (3) to introduce Vedāntic ideas to the people.[144] The actual program of the Ramakrishna Mission in the first decade of its existence did not carry out all these stated aims. The Ramakrishna Mission did establish Vedānta centers to teach the spiritual message in Dacca, Barisal and around Calcutta, but these centers appealed only to the Bengali elite, rather than to the people as a whole referred to in the stated aims of the Ramakrishna Mission, which presumably meant both the elite and the masses. Outside of Bengal, centers were established in Madras and Bangalore in south

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[143]Swami Abjajananda, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19, 20, 24, 46, 48, 60, 63-64, 89, 98, 100, 110-115, 135, 148, 165-173, 224,243, 273, 304-307, 326.

[144]Swami Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

India, in Almora in the Himalayas, and in America.[145] The Ramakrishna Mission operated two journals to spread Vedāntic ideas, but these also appealed only to the educated elite in Bengal and elsewhere. The English journal, Prabuddha Bharata (Awakened India) had been started in Madras in 1896 but was transferred to Almora in north India in 1898. The Bengali journal, Udbodhan, was started in Calcutta in 1898.[146] The other activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in the first decade included famine and plague relief work, other charitable works, and the beginning of medical and educational work. In 1897, the Ramakrishna Mission opened a famine relief center and an orphanage in Murshidabad in north Bengal. Famine relief work was also undertaken in Bihar in 1898 and in the same year two English disciples of Vivekananda opened a girls' school in Calcutta.[147] In 1899 plague threatened to become epidemic in Calcutta and several monks organized sanitation measures and medical care.[148] In 1900 a group of young men in Banaras started a Poor Men's Relief Association to help destitute persons of the city. In 1903 this project was affiliated as the Ramakrishna Home

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[145] Ibid.,pp. 118, 164-165, 172-173, 177.

[146] Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. III, No. 2 (September, 1898), p. 25.

[147] Swami Gambhirananda, op. cit., pp. 130, 172.

[148] "The Ramakrishna Mission Plague Service," Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. IV, No. 34, pp. 77-78.

of Service. Also in 1903 medical dispensaries were opened at Almora for the poor and near Rishikesh a dispensary was opened for destitute _sannyāsins_.[149] An orphanage was opened in Calcutta in 1904, and in 1906-07 the Ramakrishna Mission was occupied with famine relief in Tippera, Noakhali and 24 parganas districts in Bengal.[150] From this sketch of the actual activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in its first decade it can be seen that not very much was accomplished toward the goal of spreading practical knowledge or _Vedāntic_ concepts among the masses, or in encouraging arts and industries. Most of the effort was concentrated on charitable work such as famine and plague-relief, homes and medical dispensaries for the poor and destitute. A start was made in opening educational institutions but a valid approach to the problem of mass education was not formulated nor put into action. The Ramakrishna Mission became an organization devoted to charitable work rather than the dynamic force for national regeneration which Vivekananda had planned. Vivekananda had actually envisioned the _sannyāsins_ of his organization as agents of widespread social change and national renewal, but this was perhaps not a realistic expectation. The Ramakrishna Mission did play an

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[149] Swami Gambhirananda, _op. cit._, pp. 175, 151-159.

[150] _Ibid._, p. 188.

active role in publicizing Vivekananda's ideas among the elite. The journals _Udbodhan_ and _Prabuddha Bharata_ devoted much space to the discussion of Neo-_Vedānta_ and Vivekananda's plans for national regeneration. The _Prabuddha Bharata_ began to publish his lectures and writings. The impact of Vivekananda outside the circle of his immediate disciples in the Ramakrishna Mission can best be studied with reference to his impact on political thought.

Vivekananda, Neo-Vedānta and Nationalism

Vivekananda attended college in Calcutta in a period when Bengali cultural nationalism was gaining momentum. Vivekananda's concern with strength and activism in his Neo-_Vedānta_ doctrine was rooted in the nationalistic sentiments imbibed in his youth and college days. While in college, Vivekananda had helped Nabagopal Mitra with his national gymnasium. The idea behind this gymnasium was the cultivation of physical strength and vitality to build up a strong and independent people.[151] The idea that Bengalis lacked strength and vitality in contrast to the virile English was a major concern of the young educated elite in this period.[152]

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[151] _Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples_, pp. 18-19.

[152] The weakness and begging mentality of the Bengali was a persistent theme in the Bengali press. For instance the _Brahmo Public Opinion_ remarked that Bengalis should support a new society to promote physical fitness, because, "Every educated Bengali is painfully aware of the

The theme of development of strength and resistance was central to the thought of both Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda.[153] When he came under the influence of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda temporarily gave up the idea of cultivation of physical strength. In the years immediately after Ramakrishna's death, Vivekananda undertook some severe ascetic practices which amounted to physical deprivation in accordance with the traditional idea that the development of spirituality requires suppression of the body. In later years Vivekananda completely rejected this idea. Even as early as 1890 he wrote in a letter that morality requires physical and mental strength.[154] While speaking in Alwar in 1891 he said, "Be strong! Be manly! I have respect even for a wicked person as long as he is manly and strong, for his strength will make him someday give up his wickedness . . . ."[155] In later years Vivekananda advised the eating

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physical weakness of the nation." Brahmo Public Opinion, Vol. I, No. 32 (November 7, 1878), p. 354. For an expression of similar sentiments see "Āmader Adhinatā" (Our Dependence), Nabajīban, Vol. I (1884), pp. 590-593.

[153]Concern with the supposed Indian inferiority in physical strength as compared with the British was not limited to Bengali leaders. For a description of Gandhi's preoccupation with physical fitness see Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, The Modernity of Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

[154]Swami Vivekananda to Ram, Krishnamayi and Indu, January 5, 1890, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p. 156.

[155]The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 213.

of meat and fish to build strength, and physical exercise.[156] His diatribes against bhakti were prompted by the idea that devotionalism leads to sentimentality and loss of strength of mind, because it preaches dependence on God instead of reliance on the inner self. He proclaimed his own Vedānta as a manly religion based on the inner strength or divinity of man.[157] Vivekananda's concern with manliness and strength was a matter of personal identity and self-respect as an individual and as a member of a group. The problem was to form a positive identity in the face of the negative characterization of Bengalis by the British. Vivekananda's formulation of a "religion of strength" was in part a response to the nationalist concern with the problem of building a positive national identity.

It has often been said that Vivekananda's wanderings over a huge area of India between 1888 and 1893, and his perception of the sufferings of the masses of the people was an important factor in his interpretation of Vedānta as an activist religion of service to men.[158] It is important to note that his perception of the poverty and suffering of millions of individuals as he traveled the Indian subcontinent was

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[156] Ibid., p. 249.

[157] Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p. 143.

[158] Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him, pp. 79-80.

focused by his own conception of India as a nation imbibed in his college days. He did not see poverty as merely the suffering of individuals speaking many different languages and practicing various customs; he perceived the mass poverty of the subcontinent as the degradation of a nation to which he belonged. He responded not only as a humanitarian but as a patriot who felt special ties to this particular section of humanity, and a special responsibility toward them. A speech given in America illustrates his perception of mass suffering in India as a nationalist. He said that India's downfall was due to the degradation of the populace under Indian rule, but the English have also exploited the Indian populace and the vengeance of history will surely catch up with them also:

> What has the Englishman left? Nothing but mounds of broken brandy bottles! And God has had no mercy on my people because they had no mercy. By their cruelty they degraded the populace; and when they needed them, the common people had no strength to give for their aid. If man cannot believe in the Vengeance of God, he certainly cannot deny the Vengeance of History. And it will come upon the English; they have their heels upon our necks, they have sucked the last drop of our blood for their own pleasures, they have carried away with them millions of our money, while our people have starved by villages and provinces.[159]

Vivekananda's political views were closely akin to the _svadeśī_ ideology that became popular in the 1905 nationalist movement. In general he supported the idea of inde-

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[159]Swami Vivekananda, "The Vengeance of History," _Complete Works_, Vol. VII, p. 280.

pendent effort outside the British political system for economic, educational, and political development of the country. His views on education were very similar to those of Satish Mukherjee, the leader of the national education movement in 1905, who was a personal friend. Vivekananda advocated a revival of the ancient system of education with a close relationship between guru and student. But, like Satish Mukherjee, he suggested that the ancient pattern of education should be adapted to include scientific learning. He wanted education of the total personality which he termed "man-making education."[160] His idea was to build up respect for the national heritage among students and thus build self-respect and strength of character. In a conversation with Aswini Kumar Datta he said: "Make your students' character as strong as the thunderbolt. Of the bones of Bengali youths shall be made the thunderbolt that shall destroy India's thraldom."[161] Vivekananda was also keenly interested in self-help for the economic development of the country. His letters from America mention possibilities for markets for Indian products. He urged his disciples to either renounce the world for service of man, or else become a businessman and contribute to the economic development of

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[160] Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, Talks with Swami Vivekananda: From the Diary of a Disciple, p. 363.

[161] The Life of Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 576.

the country.[162] He urged Indians to take the initiative to build up the economy of the nation. In politics, Vivekananda welcomed the formation of the Indian National Congress as a positive step toward the formation of Indian national feeling,[163] but he was critical of the program of Congress. He felt that the Congress tactic of trying to influence English opinion to grant political rights to India inculcated an attitude of dependency on the English. He believed that the Indian elite must begin work outside the British political system to educate the masses. Political consciousness of nationhood, he believed, could be aroused by independent effort, and an attitude of self-help.[164] Vivekananda often spoke of the past greatness of India and of the future greatness before his country.[165] Unlike some of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, Vivekananda had no fear that the removal of the British would result in the renewal of the tyranny of traditionalism. He believed that Hindu society possessed the potential for growth which was impeded by

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[162] Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, Swamiji's Message to a Disciple (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1964), pp. 131-139.

[163] Swami Vivekananda, "Interview: London, 1896," Complete Works, Vol. V, p. 199.

[164] Swami Vivekananda to Swami Akhandananda, February 21, 1900, Letters of Swami Vivekananda, p. 441.

[165] Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, pp. 35-36.

British exploitation and destruction of India's cultural tradition.[166]

Many writers have speculated on the question of whether Vivekananda advocated revolt against British rule. His religious ideology stressed the duty to resist evil and oppression. He agreed with Bankim Chandra that lack of resistance was a moral weakness in India.[167] Once, upon being told the story of the desecration of Hindu temples by Muslim invaders he said, "If I were there I would never have allowed such things. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother."[168] The phrasing of this sentence was significant because Kālī, the Mother, had already been equated with the mother country in the writings of Bankim Chandra. Vivekananda himself equated patriotism with protection of the Mother in talks with his disciples.[169]

Although Vivekananda believed in resistance to oppression it cannot be asserted with certainty that he would have supported violent revolution in India. According to his brother, Bhupendranath Datta, Sister Christine

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[166]Marie Louise Burke, op. cit., p. 280.

[167]Swami Vivekananda, "The East and the West," op. cit., p. 453.

[168]Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 599.

[169]Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him, p. 132.

(an English disciple) told him that Vivekananda had told her, that he had tried to form a combination of princes for the overthrow of the foreign yoke, but had given up because there was no response.[170] This evidence is rather indirect and perhaps colored by the fact that Bhupen Datta was himself involved in violent revolutionary activities after Vivekananda's death and evidently wished to believe that Vivekananda would have sanctioned these activities. In contradiction to Bhupen's assertion we have a conversation reported by another disciple in which Vivekananda said to the editor of the Indian Mirror:

> They [the western nations] are the children of the great hero Virochana! Their power makes the five elements play like puppets in their hands. If you people believe that we shall in case of conflict with them gain freedom by applying those material forces, you are profoundly mistaken . . . . Do you know what my idea is? By preaching the profound secrets of Vedanta religion in the Western world, we shall attract the sympathy and regard of these mighty nations . . . .[171]

This statement suggests that Vivekananda was not sure whether it would be practical to attempt the overthrow of the British by force, and that he was interested in non-violent alternatives. Vivekananda was an advocate of Indian independence and his political thought was similar to the svadeśī ideology expressed by Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterji,

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[170]Bhupendranath Datta, op. cit., p. 18.

[171]Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, Swamiji's Message to a Disciple, pp. 4-5.

Aswini Kumar Datta, and Satish Mukherjee in the late nineteenth century. Self-help for self-development was the cornerstone of his entire program. Whether he would have crossed over to the more extreme forms of passive resistance and violent revolution if he had been alive during the nationalist movement of 1905 can only be a matter of conjecture.

Vivekananda's interpretation of <u>Vedānta</u> as an activist religion of social service was closely connected with his concern for national regeneration. Therefore, it is not surprising that his Neo-<u>Vedānta</u> should have political overtones. His concept of <u>Vedānta</u> as the universal religion and as India's spiritual gift to Mankind was important in the development of nationalist thought in Bengal. Vivekananda advanced the theory that each nation has its own mission and the mission of India is to spiritualize the world.[172] The concept that India possessed a unique spiritual mission could provide a rationale for the demand for the independent existence of India as a nation. This idea was explicitly expressed by Aurobindo Ghosh during the nationalist movement of 1905 when he argued that India must

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[172] According to Vivekananda the mission of India is "to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate, as it were into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race, and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious." Swami Vivekananda, <u>Lectures from Colombo to Almora</u>, pp. 6-7.

be free and independent to develop the spiritual message of Vedānta for the salvation of humanity.[173] One of the problems of creating national consciousness in a subject nation is in creating a sense of positive identity with the national entity. Both the rulers and the ruled tend to see the negative aspect of the culture of the conquered people. Nationalism is facilitated by a positive identification with the qualities of the national group. Vivekananda's positive interpretation of India's history and institutions and his formulation of the theory that India had a unique mission was one possible solution to the problem of providing a basis for positive identification with India as a national entity.[174]

Another problem in the creation of national feeling in India was the discovery of a theoretical basis for the unity of the peoples of the subcontinent, other than the unity imposed by the British administration. Vivekananda saw the people of India, divided by diverse languages and

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[173] See Chapter Six.

[174] Vivekananda's historical interpretations appealed to Indian pride: "In the history of the human race, not once or twice, but again and again, it has been the destiny of India in the past to supply spirituality to the world . . . . This she contributed even long before the rising of the Persian Empire . . . during the ascendancy of the Greeks . . . and now . . . during the ascendancy of the English, she is going to fulfil the same destiny once more." Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, op. cit., p. 69.

customs, as united in a spiritual unity. He viewed India as an immense religious organism.[175] Recognition of the importance of the spirit beyond the material world is the common thread tying all the diverse cultures of India together according to Vivekananda.[176] He believed that Islam had also contributed to the growth of spiritual life in India, but his concept of the unifying element in India was primarily Hindu.[177] Vivekananda believed that the Vedānta had special significance for the building of a sense of unity among the peoples of India. According to Vivekananda, Vedānta teaches that the divine force exists in all human beings and all human souls are equal in potential. Moreover, all human souls are united by their ultimate identity with God. He laid stress on the basic unity of human beings beneath caste and status differences. He saw a unity emerging in India based on spiritual equality, the unity of human souls with a common spiritual mission.[178]

Vivekananda's attempt to create a religious basis for active social service also had political overtones be-

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[175] Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him, p. 79.

[176] Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p. 118.

[177] Swami Vivekananda, "Islam: A Mighty Testament to Vedantism," Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. II, No. 2 (September, 1898), p. 25.

[178] Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p. 143.

cause he tended to think of service to man in terms of the uplift of the people of India. He regarded work for the good of the people of India as a religious duty.[179] The sannyāsins of the Ramakrishna Mission renounced family ties for active work to uplift the masses of India. He contributed to the idea of service to the nation as a religious duty, which had been first expressed by Bankim Chandra, and which was later used by Aurobindo Ghosh and others in their appeals for support for the anti-partition movement of 1905. The concept of sannyāsa as an institution of social activism was used in the anti-partition movement to recruit volunteers who would be willing to give the nationalist cause precedence over their personal ties. The terrorist samitis called upon volunteers to renounce family life and become nationalist sannyāsins.[180]

Although Vivekananda's religious ideology had political overtones, only one of his disciples became deeply involved in the movement of militant opposition to British rule. This seems strange in comparison with the disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami who played such an important part in the anti-partition movement. One possible explanation is that Bijoy Krishna's religious movement broke up after his death in 1899 leaving his disciples with no religious organi-

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[179]Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him, p. 201.

[180]See Chapter Six.

zation to devote their energies to. Moreover, most of the six disciples who became active in nationalist politics had developed political interests prior to their initiation by Goswami and they naturally returned to political concerns after his death. In contrast Vivekananda left an institutionalized religious movement, the Ramakrishna Mission, for his disciples to devote their lives to. Moreover, the disciples of Vivekananda, with the exception of Ajayhari Banerji, had not taken active roles in politics prior to their initiation by Vivekananda. This was a great source of disappointment to Vivekananda. He regarded Ajayhari Banerji, who had previously assisted Satish Mukherjee in the editing of the Dawn magazine, as his most promising disciple, and lamented the lack of nationalist enthusiasm in the others.[181] When the svadeśī movement began in 1905 the Ramakrishna Mission took a non-political stand. They expressed support for the program to encourage indigenous industries but they refused to make any statement supporting the political goals of the movement. Nevertheless, the Ramakrishna Mission came under government suspicion when it was found that Vivekananda's Lectures from Colombo to Almora was part of the regular reading course for the terrorist societies.[182] Actually, Sister Nivedita was the only direct

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[181] The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 548.

[182] Swami Gambhirananda, op. cit., pp. 204-220.

disciple of Swami Vivekananda who became an important leader of the nationalist movement.

Outside the Ramakrishna Mission, Vivekananda had extensive personal contact with men who became leaders of the nationalist movement. He was a close friend of Satish Mukherjee, editor of the Dawn and leader of the national education movement. Satish Mukherjee had been inspired by Vivekananda's proclamation of the spiritual message of Hinduism to the West.[183] Vivekananda's disciple, Ajayhari Banerji, who edited the Prabuddha Bharata, had previously been on the staff of Satish Mukherjee's Dawn magazine.[184] Both magazines emphasized the spiritual greatness of India. Several of Vivekananda's disciples lectured to Satish Mukherjee's Dawn Society.[185] One of Satish Mukherjee's young followers, who worked with him in the national education movement also recalled being inspired by Vivekananda's first speech in Calcutta after his return from the West. He was particularly affected by Vivekananda's stress on the

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[183] Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "Satish Mukherjee," Hindusthan Standard, April 19, 1948.

[184] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1957), pp. 215-216.

[185] Ibid., pp. 272, 273.

divine strength in each individual.[186] Thus, there was considerable interchange of personnel and ideas between the two movements centering around Vivekananda and Satish Mukherjee. Vivekananda also met Aswini Kumar Datta, another disciple of Bijoy Krishna Goswami, in Almora in 1897. Vivekananda talked to him of Vedānta as a religion of strength and the role of religion in the regeneration of India, and expressed approval of Aswini Kumar's educational work.[187] Vivekananda also came into contact with the members of Pramatha Mitra's Anuśīlan Samiti. A group of young people in this nationalist society used to visit him regularly at Belur Math in the year before his death, and Sister Nivedita and Swami Saradananda (Vivekananda's gurubhāi), used to lecture at the Anuśīlam Samiti when it was first organized.[188] Thus, Vivekananda was in contact with the disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami who were also a svadeśī ideology of self-help and self-development independent of the British. There were several groups in late

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186Benoy Kumar Sarkar, The Might of Man in the Social Philosophy of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1936, 1945), pp. 32-33, 38.

187The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 576.

188Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, Biplabī Jībaner Smṛti (Memories of My Revolutionary Life) (Calcutta: Indian Associated Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 195-200.

nineteenth century Bengal who were challenging the moderate tactic of appeal to British sense of justice adopted by the Indian National Congress, and questioning the assumption of the moderates that the British were a progressive force in India. Vivekananda, Satish Mukherjee and Aswini Kumar Datta all believed that Indian society was capable of progress, and that the presence of the British was a hindrance rather than a help. Apparently, there was a great deal of interaction among the proponents of a svadeśī ideology in the last decade of the nineteenth century.[189]

Vivekananda also met Sarala Ghoshal, a niece of Rabindranath Tagore. He wrote several letters to her about the need for an education which would build strong character. He urged her to accompany him and represent Indian womanhood in the West. Sarala Ghoshal in 1902 established a gymnasium and study group for Calcutta students which developed into a center for the revolutionary nationalist movement.[190] Vivekananda's younger brother, Bhupendranath

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[189] The fact that Vivekananda was part of a school of political thought which was emerging in the nineties, and that he had extensive contact with groups of men articulating similar ideas, is generally ignored by those who have written about his impact on the nationalist movement. For example, he is treated as an isolated figure who created a doctrine of militant opposition to British rule in B. B. Majumdar's Militant Nationalism in India and its Socio-Religious Background (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, Ltd., 1966), pp. 16-17, 57.

[190] Sarala Ghoshal, Jībaner Jhāṛa Pāta (A Few Leaves From My Life) (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, n.d.), pp. 160-162;

Datta was also involved in the revolutionary movement. He was an editor of the Jugāntar, a vernacular paper established in 1906, which advocated revolutionary violence and used religious symbolism to propagate its message.[191] Another militant nationalist leader, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay was a college friend of Vivekananda who had later converted to Catholicism. When Vivekananda began to preach Vedānta, Upadhyay attacked his doctrine saying that monism was destructive of morality. However, in 1900 Upadhyay changed his mind and became an enthusiastic admirer of the Vedānta philosophy. In 1904 he started the Sandhyā, a vernacular paper which made virulent attacks on the British and supported the svadeśī movement.[192] Among the terrorists, Hemchandra Ghosh recalled meeting Vivekananda and talking with him along with Srish Pal and several others later involved in the terrorist movement. He remembered that Vivekananda spoke of the glorious past of India and its glorious future. He spoke of religion as the building of strength of character, and he stressed the need for development of physical strength and fearlessness. He urged his listeners to shed

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see Chapter Six for further details of Sarala Ghoshal's activities during the anti-partition agitation.

[191] Bhupendranath Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

[192] B. Animananda, *The Blade: The Life and Works of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay* (Calcutta: 1947), pp. 194-230.

off the slave mentality which kept India in stagnation and subjection.[193] Thus, Vivekananda was in personal contact with many people who became active in the militant anti-partition movement.

Vivekananda's ideas were also spread through the periodicals of the Ramakrishna Mission and his published works. The Udbodhan included articles on the problems of creating a national education and the problem of creating national consciousness.[194] The Prabuddha Bharata included articles on the economic problems of India and the need for industrial and practical education for youth.[195] An article in the Prabuddha Bharata in 1903, suggested that the Indian National Congress should adopt a program of self-help and organize education and agricultural projects independently.[196] A reprint of a lecture by Swami Abhedananda defined the goal of Indians as "political freedom, social freedom, and last of all religious freedom."[197] Thus, Vivekananda's advocacy of freedom for India and his svadeśī ideology were expressed

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[193]Bhupendranath Datta, op. cit., pp. 331-335.

[194]Udbodhan, Vol. I, No. 9 (1899), pp. 591-595. Udbodhan, Vol. II, No. 18 (1900), p. 434.

[195]Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. VI, No. 63 (October, 1901), pp. 168-170.

[196]Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. VIII, No. 86 (September, 1903), p. 159.

[197]Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. IV, No. 30 (January, 1899), p. 10.

in the periodicals of the Ramakrishna Mission to some extent although the Ramakrishna Mission did not take a public political stand. The circulation of these periodicals was not very large and Vivekananda's published works probably gained a wider audience. Of these, the collection of his lectures delivered in India in 1897 from the West entitled Lectures from Colombo to Almora was the most popular. Other works published before 1905 included Talks with Vivekananda and Letters of Swami Vivekananda.[198] These three works presented most of Vivekananda's ideas about the regeneration of India. The Lectures from Colombo to Almora explained Vedānta as a religion of strength which could awaken India from stagnation and the slave mentality. The Letters of Swami Vivekananda included a great deal of discussion of Vivekananda's svadeśī program for independent educational and economic development. Vivekananda's works were found to be part of the regular reading course of terrorist samitis.[199]

Vivekananda's English disciple, Margaret Noble, who was called Sister Nivedita after she joined the Ramakrishna Mission, emphasized the nationalist aspects in her interpretation of Vivekananda's thought. She was a schoolteacher of

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[198] Bhupendranath Datta, op. cit., p. 213.

[199] Jogesh Chatterji, In Search of Freedom (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967), p. 26. Rowlatt Sedition Report (Calcutta: 1918), pp. 12, 17.

Scotch-Irish parentage interested in experimental ideas in education and radical political thought.[200] She met Vivekananda in London in 1896 and she came to India in 1898 to set up a girls' school.[201] She accepted Vivekananda as her guru and believed that his Neo-Vedānta could lead a new awakening in India. But in the years 1900-1901 she began to have doubts about whether Vivekananda's plan to regenerate India through the regeneration of Hinduism could succeed while India remained a subject nation. She was greatly influenced by Romesh Dutt's theories of the economic exploitation of India under British rule, and she came to the conclusion that as long as the British were in control they would retard Indian progress in the interest of maintaining their rule. In 1901 she wrote to a friend, "I belong to Hinduism more than I ever did, but I see the political need so clearly too!"[202] After Vivekananda's death in 1902 Nivedita went on a lecture tour to western and southern India during which she denounced British rule and advocated Indian independence.[203] Swami Brahmananda pointed out that her

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[200]Pravrajika Atmaprana, Sister Nivedita (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1961, 1967), pp. 1-4.

[201]Lizelle Raymond, The Dedicated (New York: John Day, 1953), pp. 58-59.

[202]Pravajika Atmaprana, op. cit., p. 124.

[203]Ibid., pp. 143-148.

political activity endangered the Ramakrishna Mission and she resigned from the Ramakrishna Mission.[204]

Nivedita wrote a series of books and articles interpreting the life and mission of Vivekananda stressing the political implications of his thought. In The Master as I Saw Him, published serially in the Prabuddha Bharata from 1906 to 1910, Nivedita wrote that love of India was the passion of Vivekananda's life and his purpose was the creation of a new India.[205] In her book Aggressive Hinduism, published in 1905, she wrote that Vivekananda had given the concept of sannyāsa a new significance. The true sannyāsin, according to Nivedita, is not the man who just wears the yellow robe, but the man who develops selfless devotion to an ideal. The true sannyāsin in modern times should renounce family and personal ties to work for the national community. Nivedita specifically interpreted Vivekananda's activist sannyāsa to mean renunciation for service to the nation.[206] Nivedita also emphasized the political significance of Vivekananda's concept of the spiritual mission of India. In her speech to the Indian National Congress of 1905 she

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[204] Amrita Bazar Patrika, July 19, 1902.

[205] Margaret Noble, The Master as I Saw Him, as reprinted in The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita, 4 Vols. (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita's Girls' School, 1967), Vol. I, p. 45.

[206] Margaret Noble, "Aggressive Hinduism," Complete Works of Sister Nivedita, Vol. III, pp. 505-527.

said the development of India as a nation would benefit the world.

> Our dream of an Indian nationality is not a selfish dream for India, but it is a dream for humanity in which India shall be the mother of a great cause, shall be the fosterer and the muse of all that is noble and great.[207]

Nivedita's greatest contribution to political ideology was her elaboration of Kālī symbolism in her book, Kali the Mother, published in 1900. On her first visit to India, Nivedita had become fascinated with the worship of the terrifying and yet tender goddess. In the years 1899 and 1900 when her interest was shifting to the nationalist movement she wrote Kali the Mother, an exhortation to revolution in the spirit of sacrifice to the goddess. One passage in the book urges the worshipper of Kālī to give up every interest and feeling that conflicts with her worship--family, friends, and home. The worshipper of the Mother should be ready to face death and terror to carry out the task of the Mother. The sign of Kālī awaited by the devotees is the sacrificial knife.[208] (Animal sacrifice is part of Kālī worship in Bengal.) Here, Nivedita seems to be using the symbolism of the Kālī sacrifice to call upon

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[207] B. B. Majumdar, Militant Nationalism in India and its Socio-Religious Background (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, 1966), p. 52.

[208] Margaret Noble, "Kali the Mother," Complete Works of Sister Nivedita, Vol. I, pp. 500-502.

patriots to sacrifice their lives for the mother country. Kālī is the symbol of the nation and at the same time the patron goddess of revolutionary violence. In his reminiscences Aurobindo Ghosh, a terrorist leader, mentioned reading Nivedita's book.[209] The Kālī symbolism used by the terrorists was very similar.

Nivedita was very active in the nationalist movement of 1905. In 1904 she spoke against Curzon's University bill.[210] She was closely associated with Satish Mukherjee's Dawn Society and she often spoke to the students. She supported the svadeśī movements to boycott British goods. She believed that the svadeśī movement captured the spirit of self-help and manly resistance that Vivekananda advocated.[211] She was in close contact with moderate leaders such as Rashbehari Ghosh, and with the extremist leaders, Bipin Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Bhupendranath Datta.[212] She met Auro-

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[209] Amales Tripathi, The Extremist Challenge (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1967), p. 65.

[210] Pravarjika Atmaprana, op. cit., pp. 167-168.

[211] Nivedita wrote: "In the Swadeshi movement the Indian people have found an opportunity to make themselves respected by the whole world . . . . The note of manliness and self-help is sounded throughout the Swadeshi movement. There is here no begging for help, no cringing for concessions." Indian Review (1906), Complete Works of Sister Nivedita, p. 278.

[212] Pravarjika Atmaprana, op. cit., pp. 180-181, 194.

bindo Ghosh in 1902 in Baroda and in the same year she came into contact with the Anuśīlan Samiti. She lectured to this group and provided them with literature on the Irish revolution, the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi, the American War of Independence, and Romesh Dutt's work on the Indian economy.[213] She approved of Sri Aurobindo's plans to prepare for revolution and she was a member of a secret five-man council to coordinate revolutionary societies in Bengal in 1903.[214] It is doubtful whether she supported the move toward terrorism taken by a splinter group from the Anuśīlan Samiti led by Barindra Ghosh.

Vivekananda had extensive personal contact with political leaders in Bengal and his writings were very popular with svadeśī volunteer groups and revolutionary groups. His disciple, Nivedita, emphasized the political aspect of his thought. Vivekananda was one of the early advocates of a svadeśī ideology which regarded British rule as a hindrance to the independent development and progress of Indian culture and society. He was an important contributor to the svadeśī school of thought which provided the ideological background for the svadeśī movement of 1905. Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta contained concepts which were sig-

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[213] Jadugopal Mukhopadyay, op. cit., p. 95.

[214] Aurobindo Ghosh, op. cit., p. 102.

nificant for the development of political activism. His concept of the spiritual mission of India, contained in the widely circulated Lectures from Colombo to Almora, was interpreted as a justification for the demand for Indian independence. His activist interpretation of Vedānta and the institution of sannyāsa was used by Nivedita and Aurobindo in their appeal for nationalist sannyāsins to work in the political movement for independence.[215]

Impact of Vivekananda

Vivekananda's transformation of Vedānta doctrine into an activist religious ethic was influential only among the English-educated elite prior to 1905. His disciples were almost without exception drawn from this strata of Bengali society. When he first returned from the West, Vivekananda gathered large crowds who had heard of his reputation for spiritual greatness. However, he was not able to translate this short-lived enthusiasm into a mass movement. Outside of his immediate circle of disciples and friends, his influence was spread mainly through his writings, his books, and the periodicals of the Ramakrishna Mission. All of his writings, except a few articles in the Bengali journal Udbodhan, were in English, so it is obvious

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[215]Aurobindo's transformation of Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta into a political ideology will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

that they could not have had much effect outside the elite in Bengal. It is important to point out that Vivekananda did not create an ideology with appeal outside the elite because several writers have suggested that his ideas were the basis of a religious nationalism with mass appeal.[216] In actual fact, Vivekananda was not able to propagate his ideas outside the Bengali elite during his lifetime and the religious idiom, partially derived from Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta, which was used by militant politicians in the first decade of the twentieth century, did not have any appeal beyond the upper castes.[217]

Vivekananda's approach to religion was conditioned by his western education and his experience of student life in Calcutta. He shared the political aspirations of the elite for the uplift of the Indian nation. His Neo-Vedānta provided a religious ethic for social service and work for national regeneration. He was concerned with the same problems that occupied the Brāhmas, Bankim Chandra and the Neo-Vaiṣṇava group. His ethical position was funamentally similar to theirs. He believed that service of man is true worship of God, and he emphasized general ethical principles

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[216] See Karnakaran Kotta, Religion and Political Awakening in India (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1965). Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Growth of Nationalism in India, 1857-1905 (Calcutta: Presidency Library, 1957).

[217] See Chapter Six.

rather than the ritual code. But Vivekananda wove this ethical position into the _advaita_ _Vedānta_ metaphysic which was the dominant strand in the religious thought of the elite of Bengal. Bankim Chandra had suggested that Bengalis abandon the _Śakta_-_Vedānta_ tradition and Chaitanya's _Vaiṣṇavism_ for a _Vaiṣṇava_ religion based on the portrayal of Kṛṣṇa in the _Mahābhārata_. Vivekananda's reorientation of the Hindu religious tradition was potentially more influential because it did not cast off the mainstream of the tradition.

The actual impact of Vivekananda's Neo-_Vedānta_ doctrines on the society of the English-educated upper castes is difficult to measure. An autobiography by the famous Bengali nationalist leader, Subhas Chandra Bose, gives some indication of the interpretation young students made of Vivekananda's message. Subhas Bose, who was born in a _Kayāstha_ family in 1897, first came across the writing of Vivekananda when he was about fifteen. He describes his initial reaction:

> For days, weeks, months I pored over his works. His letters as well as his speeches from Colombo to Almora, replete as they were with practical advice to his countrymen, inspired me most.[218]

Bose decided to adopt as his ideal the service of humanity,

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[218] Subhas Chandra Bose, _An Indian Pilgrim_ (Calcutta: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p. 33.

particularly the service of his countrymen. He then got together a group of friends to study Vivekananda. According to his autobiography his new enthusiasm had an effect on his behavior in his family:

> I was no longer the goody-goody boy afraid of displeasing his parents. I had a new ideal before me which had inflamed my soul--to effect my own salvation and to serve humanity, by abandoning all worldly desires and breaking away from all undue restraint. I no longer recited Sanskrit verses inculcating obedience to one's parents; on the contrary, I took to verses which preached defiance . . . Vivekananda's ideal brought me into conflict with the existing family and social order.[219]

According to Subhas Bose, Vivekananda taught that "revolt is necessary to self-fulfilment."[220] In college he joined a group of followers of Vivekananda who

> . . . emphasized social service as a means to a spiritual development. It interpreted social service not in terms of building hospitals and charitable institutions, as the followers of Vivekananda were inclined to do, but as national reconstruction.[221]

Subhas Bose's account of the impact of Vivekananda's writings on his own thought suggests that in spite of Vivekananda's respect for Hindu tradition his impact was not revivalist. The message of his works to the young was self-reliance and individual judgment which militated against the requirements

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[219] Ibid., p. 35.

[220] Ibid., p. 44.

[221] Ibid., p. 46.

of the traditional Hindu social code of conformity and obedience to elders. His message of ethical activism could be interpreted as social service along the lines of the Ramakrishna Mission program or as sanctioning political activism.

CHAPTER VI

Political Vedānta

Neo-Hinduism and the Emergence of Political Militancy in Bengal

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the dominant political ideology among the Bengali elite was moderate and loyalist. Leaders of e Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava religious movements presented an alternate ideology of militant opposition to British rule, but the moderate view continued to dominate political associations and the native press in Bengal until 1905.

In previous chapters we have noted that the Indian Association, the most important political association in late nineteenth century Bengal, was formed by members of the Bengali elite who rebelled against landlord domination in the older British Indian Association. The members of the new association were mainly professional men and a group of Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas played an important role in the central leadership. By 1888 the Indian Association had 115 branches in Bengal Presidency, three branches in Assam, and three branches in northwest India which primarily appealed to Bengali residents in that area.[1] The first issue which was

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[1]Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 221.

pressed by the Indian Association after its formation in 1876 was a demand for change in regulations concerning entry into the civil service which severely handicapped Indian candidates. In 1879 the Association began to agitate for the introduction of a scheme of local self-government. When the Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878 curtailing the freedom of newspapers in Indian languages the Indian Association agitated for its repeal. In the early eighties the Indian Association mounted an unsuccessful campaign in favor of the Ilbert Bill, introduced by the Ripon administration to allow Indian judges jurisdiction over Europeans, which was defeated by the agitation of European residents in India.[2] As a whole the program of the Indian Association was geared to specific issues which appealed to the political aspirations of the Bengali elite. Their support for electoral representation in local government was a bid to expand their political power, while the campaign against the Vernacular Press Act demonstrates their resistance to British efforts to limit the growth of political power among the Bengali elite. At the same time the Indian Association viewed British rule as fundamentally beneficial for the elite and for India as a whole. They advocated change in specific policies of the British Indian administration but

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[2] Ibid., pp. 163-168.

they did not contemplate discontinuance of British rule in the near future.

In the early eighties the leaders of the Indian Association became acutely aware of the need for a unified Indian agitation to counter the campaign of Englishmen resident in India against the Ilbert Bill. An all-India conference was sponsored by the Indian Association in 1883 and again in 1885. Meanwhile, Hume and the Bombay leaders had organized the Indian National Congress in Bombay with a similar object. The two meetings were held separately in 1885, but in the following year the Indian National Congress was held in Calcutta and the Indian Association was strongly represented.[3] The Congress, like the Indian Association, was dominated by professional men,[4] and one of its most important platforms was Indianization of the civil service. The Congress also asked for electoral representation in the legislative councils, but they sought the participation of the educated in government of the country rather than a popular electorate. Surendranath Banerjea, Bengali leader of the Indian Association, stated

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[3]Bimanbehari Majumdar and Bhabat Prasad Mazumdar, Congress and Congressmen, 1885-1917 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967), p. 9.

[4]P. C. Ghosh, The Development of the Indian National Congress, 1892-1909 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960), pp. 11, 12, 23-26.

in his presidential address to Congress in 1895:

> We should be satisfied if we obtain representative institutions of modified character for the educated community who by reason of their culture and enlightenment, their assimilation of English ideas, and their familiarity with English methods of government, might be presumed to be qualified for such a boon.[5]

For the future, members of the Indian National Congress generally envisioned gradual evolution toward self-government with the aid of the British. In the nineties severe famines turned their attention to economic problems. The tariff policy of the British Indian government was alleged to be harmful to the growth of Indian industry, and British policy was generally attacked by Dadabhai Naoroji and others as exploitative in economic terms, but they pressed for reform rather than overthrow of foreign rule.[6]

From 1875 to 1900 the vernacular and native owned English press in Bengal generally supported the moderate line of the Indian Association and the Congress, criticizing specific policies but affirming their loyalty to the British government. The press generally maintained that Britain had introduced beneficial institutions and ideas in India, and the country had not yet progressed sufficiently to

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[5]C. F. Andrews and Girija Mookerjee, The Rise and Growth of Congress in India (Delhi: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967), p. 160.

[6]Bipan Chandra, The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1966), pp. 231-245, 653-670.

dispense with British guidance. In 1880 one vernacular paper expressed the feeling of dependency in these words:

> The chances are small that the habit of self-reliance which is yet extremely rare among the people of Bengal, will receive a perfect development without any extrinsic aid. An extrinsic impetus is necessary, and we cannot expect to receive it in so large a measure from any other nation than the British. Hence it is said that we stand in need of their assistance. If they continue to rule over us for some time longer, and we are thus enabled to appreciate the value of their administration and to regard them as our own, it is possible that we may in time improve.[7]

At the same time most of the native newspapers which were controlled by the Bengali elite expressed a keen awareness and resentment of racial arrogance shown by British administrators. Moreover, they often referred to the expression of a specific dislike for the English-educated Bengali and his political aspirations by the British. One Calcutta newspaper commented in 1886:

> The more the British Government is becoming stable in the country, the wider is becoming the gulf between the natives and Europeans. Formerly the English were not in the habit of oppressing natives . . . . The Europeans who are gradually becoming more powerful now look down upon the natives, while the natives, who have advanced in education and intelligence, feel the difference rather keenly. The murder of natives and the violation of their women by Europeans have become the order to the day . . . . The brutes very rarely receive adequate punishment.[8]

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[7] Sadharani, March 28, 1880, Report on the Native Papers of Bengal (hereafter referred to as RNPB)(week ending 3 April, 1880), p. 4.

[8] Samaya, August 20, 1886, RNPB (1886), p. 974.

Another newspaper further commented that the Bengali English-educated class was held in particular contempt by the British in spite of the strong loyalty of this group to the British Raj. Moreover, educated Bengalis "are excluded from all high appointments in the public services and difficulties are thrown in their way, even if they seek to earn a livelihood in distant provinces such as Behar and the North-West."[9]

The economic consequences of British rule were frequently discussed in the Bengali press from the seventies onward.[10] In the late nineties new tariff laws were denounced as injurious to Indian interests by the moderate press. A vernacular paper managed by Brāhmas who were active in the Indian Association and Congress, commented in 1896 that the British Indian Administration's tariff policy was openly sacrificing Indian interests to those of Lancashire, by reducing the duty on English piece goods and imposing a tax on Indian cotton products. But the paper suggested no remedy beyond agitation to make the British public aware of the injustice being done to India.[11]

The leadership of the Indian Association was also

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[9] Ananda Bazar Patrika, March 30, 1880, RNPB (week ending 10 April, 1880), p. 3.

[10] Mookerjee's Magazine, Vol. V (1876), p. 12, as quoted in Amales Tripathi, The Extremist Challenge (Calcutta: Orient Longsmans, 1967), p. 110.

[11] Sanjivani, February 8, 1896, RNPB (1896), p. 159.

very much opposed to British economic policy. Surendranath Banerjea, influenced by the theories of Dadabhai Naoraji, expressed the idea that British rule was draining India of its wealth and preventing the formation of capital for economic development in several speeches, but he saw the solution in change in British policy. He advocated Indianisation of the civil service to prevent the drain of English salaries out of India and tariff protection for Indian industry.[12] In spite of the awareness of Bengali moderate politicians that British economic policies were detrimental to India as a whole, and their realization of British hostility to the aspirations of their own group, they maintained their faith in British intentions. Romesh Chunder Dutt, a prominent Bengali economist who expounded on the drain theory of British economic exploitation in his Economic History of India, nevertheless expressed the belief that the educated classes were dependent on the British for further progress. In a speech to the Indian National Congress given in 1899 he said:

> Educated India has practically identified itself with British rule, because it is by a continuance of British rule that educated India seeks to secure that large measure of self-government and that position among the modern nations of the earth which it is our aim and endeavour to secure.[13]

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[12]Bipan Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 642, 648, 656.

[13]Majumdar and Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

The moderate ideology which dominated the political thinking of the Bengali elite in the nineteenth century reflected a feeling of dependence on British rule. The Bengali elite of the late nineteenth century was closely tied to education and professional opportunities available under British rule, and they naturally felt to some degree dependent on its continuance. In spite of their criticism of British economic and administrative policies, it was difficult for them to imagine dispensing with British rule which had been responsible for introducing them to western ideas and institutions which they greatly valued. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Bengali elite viewed the general trend of British policy from 1875 to 1900 as unfavorable to their interests. We have noted above that they saw the lowering of the maximum age for the civil service examination as a move to prevent educated Indians from attaining civil service appointments, and the Vernacular Press Act as a bid to suppress their power through the press. The Bengali elite also felt that the British were very slow to expand Indian participation in government. They were enthusiastic when Ripon briefly reversed this policy in the early eighties with a municipalities bill with provision for representation at the municipal level, but they believed that the bill had been emasculated by conservative pressures in the British administration.[14] The inclusion of a minority

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[14] Anil Seal, op. cit., pp. 156-162.

of indirectly elected representatives in the Legislative Council in 1892 was considered merely a token gesture by many members of the Bengali elite.[15] They were also much concerned about British racial attitudes and the contempt British officials expressed for educated Indians in general and the Bengali _bābu_ in particular.[16]

By the end of the nineteenth century the old faith of the Bengali elite that the British would gradually relinquish power, Indianize the administration and introduce representative government had been considerably undermined. At the same time the Bengali elite were increasingly worried about their economic prospects because professional and government jobs were not keeping pace with the growth in numbers of the English-educated in the late nineteenth century. In the last few years of the nineteenth century many articles appeared in the Bengali press about the deteriorating economic position of the "middle

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[15]Aurobindo Ghosh, "New Lamps for Old," _Indu Prakash_, August 7, 1893.

[16]British administrators generally deprecated the political aspirations of the Bengali elite. They regarded the English-educated elite as an isolated group who talked of nationalism but in reality merely represented their own interests. The British were confident that they understood the needs of the Indian peasant better than the despised Bengali _bābu_ could understand them. As the political activity of the dissatisfied elite increased, the British began to regard them as potentially seditious. See Anil Seal, _op_. _cit_., pp. 160-161, 191-192.

class."[17] In this atmosphere of frustration it is not surprising that groups within the Bengali elite were attracted to militant political ideologies of opposition to British rule.

In the preceding chapters on Neo-*Vaiṣṇavism* and Neo-*Vedānta* religious movements we have shown how these Neo-Hindu movements served as centers of an emerging political militancy in the eighties and nineties. The crucial importance of Neo-Hindu movements in the articulation of militant opposition to British rule was due to several factors. The established political associations, the Indian Association, and the Congress, were firmly controlled by the moderates during this period as were most of the vernacular and native-owned English papers. These organizations were firmly loyalist in spite of their opposition to specific British policies. The advocacy of overthrow of British rule by groups within these organizations would have been discouraged by the entrenched moderate leadership. Therefore, it is not surprising that militant politics should first have been articulated by groups outside of the established political associations.

The Neo-Hindu religious movements were particularly

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[17] *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, May 23, 1900, *RNPB* (1900), pp. 468-469. *Dacca Gazette*, May 22, 1899, *RNPB* (1899), p. 355.

fitted to stimulate militant political thought because they provided a rationale for criticizing dependence on British rule. It was difficult for the Bengali elite to take a position of opposition to British rule because they so much admired British culture and institutions. The Neo-Hindu movements provided a means of assimilating selected western ideas while rejecting western rule and asserting the value of the Hindu tradition. The Brāhma Samāj began the religious reform movement introducing doctrines that closely resembled Christianity, which they claimed were really derived from the Upaniṣads, and thus had a base in Hindu culture. The Neo-Vaiṣṇava and Neo-Vedānta movements went further and created a real integration of western values into the Hindu religious framework. The restatement of Śakta and Vaiṣṇava religious doctrine provided an ethic of social activism which satisfied the desire of the Bengali elite for economic, political, and social progress. At the same time the religious reform ideologies maintained the self-respect of the elite and lessened their feeling of dependence on the British. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Aswini Kumar Datta, Bipin Pal and Vivekananda advanced a theory of an indigenous form of modernization which pictured Hindu society and institutions as capable of independent progress. Hindu thought was shown to be conducive to social activism necessary for modern development, and it was argued that British presence was a hindrance rather than a help in the

growth of a progressive society in India. According to the Neo-Hindu ideologies, progress depended on the development of self-reliance and self-initiative rather than imitation of the West. The Neo-Vaiṣṇavas and Vivekananda criticized the dependence of moderate politicians on the British and called for the development of an independent political base. Neo-Hindu ideology provided the Bengali elite with a new concept of their possible role as an elite independent of the British, leading the rest of Bengali society, whereas they had previously regarded British presence as necessary to safeguard their way of life. Neo-Hindu leaders thought in terms of independence and efforts to develop a broader base of political support to challenge British control.

In religion, education, and politics, the Ādi Brāhma Samāj, the Neo-Vedānta, and Neo-Vaiṣṇava religious reform movements advocated a svadeśī attitude of self-help for self-development which was in marked contrast to the moderate strategy of persuading the British government to introduce reforms. The Tagores, Rajnarain Bose and Nabagopal Mitra of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj were among the first to promote the idea of economic svadeśī in the Hindu Melā with its display of indigenous arts and industries. Rabindranath Tagore established Santiniketan in 1901 to popularize the idea of national or svadeśī education suitable to the Bengali cultural environment. Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the

Nabajīban group had criticized the Indian National Congress approach of petitioning the British and called for an independent policy of political self-help. Aswini Kumar Datta and Satish Mukherjee, among the followers of Bijoy Krishna Goswami, founded organizations and journals to propagate theories of national education and economic svadeśī. Vivekananda also preached a doctrine of economic self-development and education in accordance with Indian cultural traditions, and deplored Congress reliance on persuading British politicians to introduce reform in India. All these leaders proclaimed their faith in the ability of Hindu society to progress independently and many advocated political independence.

During the eighties and nineties the basic outlines of a militant political ideology of svadeśī and svarāj had been articulated by Neo-Hindu leaders but their viewpoint did not gain acceptance among appreciable numbers of the elite until the first decade of the twentieth century. The organs of political propaganda among the elite, the press, and political associations, were still in the hands of the moderates. The organizations created by Neo-Hindu leaders, which included the Hindu Melā of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj, Aswini Kumar Datta and Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta's volunteer service and political associations in Barisal, Satish Mukherjee's Dawn Society for students in Calcutta, and Pramatha Mitra's Anuśīlan Samiti were small groups of less than a

hundred, as were Vivekananda's close circle of admirers and the Vivekananda Societies for students in Calcutta. The numbers involved in these societies led by Neo-Hindu leaders were small compared to the Indian Association with branches in almost every district in Bengal. Nevertheless some of these societies later served as nuclei of militant political organizations. The journals of Neo-Hindu leaders had a small circulation compared to leading moderate papers such as the *Sañjībanī*.[18]

Until the end of the nineteenth century the militant political ideology associated with Neo-Hindu movements was a minority viewpoint among the Bengali elite which had not yet seriously challenged the moderates. However, between 1899 and 1905 the extreme unpopularity of the administration of Viceroy Curzon created new conditions in which the supporters of *svarāj* and *svadeśī* rapidly gained popularity among the elite, and were eventually able to challenge moderate control of press and political associations. The first incident which alarmed the elite occurred in 1899 when Viceroy Curzon supported a Calcutta Municipal Bill reducing the percentage of elected representatives on the Calcutta Council. The Bengali elite saw this as a move to remove their influence in municipal government under the pretence

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[18]Circulation of 4,000 in 1886. See *RNPB* (1886), p. 124.

of increasing efficiency.[19] In the years 1899 and 1900 the Bengali language press also expressed great indignation over the workings of the British Indian court system which they claimed would never convict a European for the murder of an Indian. The complaints of the native press about arrogance and injustice along racial lines during Curzon's administration were more bitter than in preceding years.[20] In 1901 when the Viceroy proposed to build the Victoria Memorial the vernacular press was highly critical of so costly an undertaking in view of the recent famines in India.[21] By 1903 the vernacular press frequently referred to Curzon as an autocratic ruler insensitive to the people he governed. According to one paper:

> His Excellency's failure is principally due to his . . . profound faith in his own infallibility and omniscience . . . and his natural proneness to treat the Indian people as a race of precocious, over-grown children who do not know what is good for them.[22]

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[19] Sanjivani, June 29, 1899, RNPB (1899), p. 480.

[20] Hitavadi, July 21, 1899, RNPB (1899), pp. 531-533; Prabhat, June 27, 1900, RNPB (1900), p. 514; Bangabhumi, May 28, 1901, RNPB (1901), p. 427.

[21] Bangabhumi, February 19, 1901, RNPB (1901), pp. 159-160; Prabhat, February 20, 1901, RNPB (1901), p. 160.

[22] People and Prativasi, April 14, 1903, RNPB (1903), p. 350.

Then, in 1904 a Universities Act was passed which tightened official control of universities, raised standards for private colleges, and set minimum fees. This measure more than any previous one alarmed the Bengali elite for they saw it as a government measure to restrict the growth of higher education and their influence in educational institutions. They were deeply concerned because their elite status was closely tied to prominence in the colleges and Professions.[23] The Bengali press in these years frequently expressed the belief that the administration of Curzon was deliberately trying to undermine the position of the English-educated in Bengal.[24]

Economic distress among the English-educated elite no doubt contributed to the atmosphere of political unrest. Educated unemployment had been increasing steadily in the last quarter of a century,[25] and school teachers and civil servants on small fixed salaries suffered particularly from the general rise in the cost of living, and particularly

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[23]Bengalee, February 25, 1904, Report on Native Owned English Newspapers in Bengal (hereafter referred to as RNEPB) (1904), p. 109. Hitavarta, November 6, 1904, RNPB (1904), p. 1016.

[24]Indian Nation, January 26, 1903, RNEPB (1903), p. 37. Barisal Hitaishi, April 9, 1904, RNPB (1904), pp. 397-398.

[25]Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest (London: Macmillan and Co., 1910), pp. 216-218.

from the sharp rise in food prices in Bengal in 1905.[26] Actual economic hardships were chaneled toward anti-British feelings by the publication of books and articles presenting the drain theory of English exploitation in India. The drain theory had been formulated by Dadabhai Naoroji and others in the early seventies and it was known among Bengali intellectual circles in the late nineteenth century.[27] Around the turn of the century two books, one written in English and one in Bengali, and a large number of press articles focused public attention on British economic exploitation as the explanation of Indian poverty. Romesh Chunder Dutt's Economic History was first published in 1899 and the native press frequently cited the drain theories of Dutt and Naoroji as an authoritative explanation of famine and poverty in India.[28] The accusation that the drain was responsible for the constant reoccurence of famines in India was put in a more emotional form in a Bengali work published in 1904, Ganesh Deuskar's Deśer Kathā, which later became part of the

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[26] Amales Tripathi, The Extremist Challenge, p. 144. See also Dacca Gazette, October 2, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 994.

[27] Amales Tripathi, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

[28] Bangabandhu, April 7, 1900, RNPB (1900), p. 293. Ananda Bazar Patrika, May 23, 1900, RNPB (1900), p. 409. Burdwan Sanjivani, August 6, 1901, RNPB (1901), pp. 648-650.

regular reading course of terrorist groups.[29]

The estrangement between the Bengali elite and the British administration was greatly heightened by the partition of Bengal in 1905. The province of Bengal had included Bihar, Orissa, and Assam as well as Bengal proper until 1854 when Assam and Sylhet were given a separate administration. In the last years of the nineteenth century the government considered the province of Bengal too large and unwieldy, and began to discuss partition schemes. In 1903 it was suggested that the east Bengal districts of Dacca, Mymensingh, and Chittagong should be separated from Bengal province and incorporated into Assam.[30] When the proposal to switch the easternmost provinces of Bengal to Assam was released in 1903, Bengali papers in Calcutta and east Bengal voiced considerable protest,[31] and in 1904 Lord Curzon felt it necessary to tour east Bengal in the hope of gaining support for the partition scheme. In spite of the opposition sentiment which he encountered,[32] Curzon decided

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[29] Jogesh Chatterji, In Search of Freedom (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1967), p. 26.

[30] Amales Tripathi, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-95.

[31] Charu Mihir (Mymensingh), December 15, 1903, RNPB (1903), p. 1096. Indian Mirror, December 17, 1903, RNEPB (1903), p. 473.

[32] Bengalee, February 20, 1904, RNEPB (1904), p. 104. Indian Mirror, February 27, 1904, RNEPB (1904), p. 116.

to go ahead with an expanded partition plan in 1905 which incorporated all of east Bengal into a new province of East Bengal and Assam. According to the official government argument, partition was necessary for administrative reasons. The total province of Bengal was alleged to be too large and populous for a single administration under a Lieutenant Governor to handle efficiently, with the result that the outlying districts were neglected. Moreover, the Government argued that the Muslim majority areas of east Bengal remained backward and their development would be stimulated under a separate administration.[33] The partition gave Muslims a majority in the province of East Bengal and Assam, while in the old province of Bengal, Biharis and Oriyas were more numerous than Bengalis.

The political leaders of Bengal argued that the province should not be partitioned because it was a cultural unit with a common language. The press lamented that "with the introduction of this unfortunate scheme the association of ages will be torn asunder, the ties of blood and kinship will be broken, and the nationality of the Bengali race will disappear."[34] Some newspapers opposed any partition scheme

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[33] J. R. McLane, "The Decision to Partition Bengal in 1905," Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. II, No. 3 (July, 1905), pp. 221-237.

[34] Indian Mirror, July 11, 1905, RNEPB (1905), p. 253.

with the argument that the problems of administering the old unwieldy Bengal province could be solved by replacing the Lieutenant Governor with a Governor and Executive Council as in Bombay and Madras.[35] Other papers said that Bengalis would accept an alternate partition which separated Bihar and other non-Bengali areas, so long as Bengal proper remained intact.[36] The decision to separate east and west Bengal was regarded as a calculated move on the part of the British to discourage the growth of Bengali national feeling and nationalist political agitation led by the English-educated elite. According to the Bengalee, edited by Surendranath Banerjea,

> The real objects of the partition scheme are threefold, namely to destroy the collective power of the Bengali people, to overthrow the political ascendancy of Calcutta, and lastly, to foster in East Bengal the growth of a Mahommadan power, which it is hoped, will have the effect of keeping in check the rapidly growing strength of the educated Hindu community.[37]

The political movements in Bengal to protest partition went through several phases of increasing militancy. When the fact that the government was considering a partition plan was revealed in 1903, moderate leaders convened protest meetings and collected signatures for petitions. After par-

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[35] Bengalee, February 20, 1904, RNEPB (1904), p.104.

[36] Dacca Prakash, July 23, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 726.

[37] Bengalee, July 23, 1905, RNEPB (1905), p. 270.

tition was announced in 1905 the svadeśī movement arose which included boycott of British goods and the official educational system. Beginning in 1906, the militant or Extremist party began to press for a broader passive resistance program of non-cooperation with the British administration, and in 1907 the terrorist movement broke out.

In 1903 protest meetings were held in Calcutta, and in Dacca, Mymensingh, and Chittagong, the districts whose separation was threatened.[38] When the final decision to partition Bengal was announced in July, 1905, a giant protest meeting was held in the Town Hall of Calcutta,[39] and a petition with 70,000 signatures was dispatched to the Secretary of State for India from east Bengal.[40] The Indian Association organized a deputation to the government to press for a revision of the partition.[41] But some of the younger leaders had lost faith in moderate "constitutional agitation" consisting of meetings, petitions, and deputations, which had been used by Surendranath Banerjea and his associates. The New India edited by Bipin Pal proclaimed:

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[38] Dacca Gazette, January 11, 1904, RNPB (1904), p. 85. Sanjivani, January 14, 1904, RNPB (1904), pp. 90-91.

[39] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958), pp. 45-46.

[40] Dacca Gazette, July 10, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 674.

[41] Bengalee, January 14, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 23.

> . . . there can be no constitutional agitation in this country owing to the absence of popular rights . . . . The old methods of political tinkering have proved futile . . .[42]

In July the vernacular press began to call for a new political tactic of boycott of British goods.[43] In August a large meeting in Calcutta adopted a resolution to "abstain from the purchase of British manufactures so long as the partition resolution is not withdrawn, as a protest . . . disregard of Indian public opinion."[44] Meetings were organized in Calcutta and district towns of Bengal to take the *svadeśī* vow to abstain from British goods and buy *svadeśī*.[45] *Svadeśī* stores were created to push Indian textiles and other indigenous products, and campaigns were organized by volunteer brigades to persuade people to buy *svadeśī*.[46]

As the *svadeśī* movement progressed it expanded beyond economic issues to include boycott of official educational institutions and the establishment of independent national schools. The idea of creating an autonomous

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[42] *New India*, September 9, 1905, *RNEPB* (1905), p. 332.

[43] *Barisal Hitaishi*, July 19, 1905, *RNPB* (1905), p. 770. *Sanjivani*, July 20, 1905, as quoted by Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906*, pp. 33-34.

[44] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906*, p. 45.

[45] *Barisal Hitaishi*, September 6, 1905, *RNPB* (1905), p. 892.

[46] *Rowlatt Sedition Report* (Calcutta: 1918), p. 71.

"national" education system which had been voiced by Satish Mukherjee and Vivekananda in the nineties, received increased attention from the press after official control of the universities was strengthened by the University Act of 1904.[47] The national education movement was organized in a conference held in Calcutta in November, 1905. In August, 1906 the Bengal National School and College was set up with Satish Mukherjee as superintendent and Aurobindo Ghosh as principal. The curriculum of the new college emphasized ancient and modern Indian languages and courses in the history and culture of India. Education was in the vernacular with English as a compulsory subject.[48] The new national education was supposed to be modern education in harmony with the Indian cultural tradition.

At first the old moderate leaders like Surendranath Banerjea and Rashbehari Ghosh, who dominated Bengali political associations, went along with the svadeśī movement, although they were rather nervous about the use of new tactics. Then, in mid-1906, new leaders who had come into prominence during the anti-partition agitation, began to take a more radical stance. The attemps of the East Bengal and Assam Government of Lieutenant Governor Fuller to orga-

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[47] Sandhya, March 14, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 263.

[48] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1957), pp. 150-151.

nize a faction of pro-partition Muslims around the Nawab of Dacca and to repress anti-partition agitation in east Bengal alarmed the Bengali elite. In October the government issued the Carlyle Circular which asked schools to expel students participating in political meetings, and another circular made it illegal to shout "Bande Mātaram" (Hail to the Mother!). Police harrassed a procession of the Bengal Provincial Congress which met in Barisal in 1906 on the pretext that the slogan "Bande Mātaram" had been raised.[49] By mid-1906 some native newspapers were arguing that more militant tactics were necessary in order to combat British suppression of the svadeśī movement.[50] In the Bande Mataram newspaper Bipin Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh called for an extension of the svadeśī movement from economic boycott and national education to a general program of passive resistance and non-cooperation with the British. These new leaders also began an all out attack on the old "begging" tactic of the moderate leaders.[51]

Thus within the English-educated elite there was a serious split. The moderates who had gone along with the

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[49] Sanjivani, April 19, 1906, RNPB (1906), pp. 355-357.

[50] Sandhya, April 19, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 367. Jugantar, April 22, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 398.

[51] Aurobindo Ghosh, "The Gospel according to Surendranath," Bande Mataram, April 22, 1907.

svadeśī movement in its initial stages were not enthusiastic about a wider movement of non-cooperation. They feared that the passive resistance program would lead to direct confrontation with the British and a breakdown of law and order. They called for moderate tactics that would lead to orderly progress. The younger radicals, on the other hand, suggested that the old moderate leadership was a clique of successful lawyers who maintained exclusive control of politics, and were perhaps secretly in alliance with the British bureaucracy.[52]

By the end of 1906 the nationalist leadership in Bengal was split into Moderate and Extremist factions.[53] The Extremists openly called for independence and ridiculed the Moderates for merely asking for more appointments in the civil service and legislative councils.[54] Bipin Pal and

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[52] Sandhya, September 1, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 822.

[53] The terms "Moderate" and "Extremist" were widely used in the contemporary Bengali press to denote the two opposing factions in the Indian National Congress and its Bengal provincial branch. The political views of the Extremists fit into the definition of political militancy given in the introduction of this thesis. The Extremists held the militant political view that British administration would only grant reforms under duress, and they advocated overthrow of British rule. The term "Extremist" may be understood to refer to a faction in the Indian National Congress, while "militant" is used in this thesis as a generic term for all those who advocated overthrow of British rule and tactics of confrontation with the administration.

[54] Sandhya, September 1, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 822. For moderate view of the split see Hindoo Patriot, September 10, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 408.

Aurobindo Ghosh met Tilak, the Extremist Maratha leader, in Calcutta, and decided to support him as the Extremist candidate for the Congress presidency.[55] However, a compromise was worked in 1906 whereby both Moderates and Extremists accepted Dadabhai Naoroji as president and resolutions were adopted supporting the goal of svarāj and the svadeśī and national education movements in Bengal. But in 1907 Moderates and Extremists clashed at the Bengal Provincial Congress and again at the Surat Meeting of the Indian National Congress. As a result of the Surat split the Moderates retained control of Congress, but without the participation of the Extremists it was considerably weakened as a political body.[56] In 1909 there was some effort to reunite the Moderate and Extremist parties at the Bengal Provincial Congress, but finally separate meetings were held.[57]

With the growth of the anti-partition agitation, an increasing number of volunteer brigades, gymnasiums, and nationalist societies were organized. Their programs included physical training, nationalist indoctrination and svadeśī propaganda activities. In 1906 the radical wing of

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[55] Charu Mihir, September 11, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 862.

[56] P. Singh, "The Indian National Congress-Surat Split," Bengal Past and Present, Vol. LXXXIV, Pt. 2, No. 158 (July-December, 1965), pp. 121-139.

[57] A. B. Purani, The Life of Sri Aurobindo: a Source Book (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1964), pp. 133-134.

one of these nationalist societies, the Anuśīlan Samiti, established the Jugāntar, a vernacular newspaper which preached a doctrine of violent revolution. Most of the members of the Jugāntar group were arrested for a terrorist bombing in May, 1908.[58] Beginning in 1908, samitis devoted to terrorism quickly multiplied and terrorist murders continued for a decade, but the terrorists were never able to arouse the necessary public support for a wider revolutionary movement.[59] The British were able to control the 1905 revolutionary movement in Bengal through a policy of conciliation mixed with repression. By 1909 the radical and revolutionary press was effectively closed down by prosecutions for sedition, and many nationalist samitis were repressed under a new law which gave the government special powers to try suspected anarchists without jury and to break up organizations suspected of sedition.[60] Most of the Extremist leaders were imprisoned or deported in the same year. At the same time the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 granted a small measure of self-government, and in another

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[58] Rowlatt Sedition Report, annexure 1.

[59] Sumit Sarkar, "Trends in Bengal's Swadeshi Movement, Part 1," Bengal Past and Present, Vol. LXXXIV, Pt. 1 (January-July, 1965), pp. 11-12.

[60] Sanjivani, January 14, 1909, RNPB (1909), p. 102. Hindoo Patriot, December 14, 1908, RNEPB (1908), p. 402.

conciliatory gesture Bengal was reunited in 1912.[61] Nevertheless, the svadeśī movement succeeded in mobilizing an unprecedented amount of political activity in Bengal.

Associations established by Neo-Hindu leaders played an important role in the outburst of political activism after the partition. In January, 1909 the British administration singled out five national volunteer societies in east Bengal as seditious and declared them illegal. These five were the Svadeś Bāndhab Samiti of Barisal, the Brati Samiti of Faridpur, the Anuśīlan Samiti centered in Dacca, and the Suhṛd and Sādhān Samitis of Mymensingh.[62] These volunteer organizations included programs of physical fitness training and most of them were involved in social service activities, propaganda to popularize the boycott, and in some cases, terrorism. According to British reports: "Besides interfering with the sale of foreign goods by picketing shops, and on many occasions by destroying the goods, the volunteers of Bengal assisted at political meetings . . . ."[63] Three of the five outlawed organizations were organized by

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[61] J. H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 35-41.

[62] Sanjivani, January 14, 1909, RNPB (1909), p. 102.

[63] James Campbell Ker, Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917 (confidential report) (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1917), p. 9.

Neo-Hindu leaders and a fourth had been connected with a prominent member of the Tagore family.

The Neo-Vaiṣṇava leader, Aswini Kumar Datta, had established the People's Association in Barisal and the Backergunge countryside. In 1905, after partition, Aswini Kumar reorganized his network of supporters in the Svadeś Bāndhab Samiti (National Friends Society) to protest partition and promote svadeśī. The British alleged that the Svadeś Bāndhab Samiti was involved in sedition and it was one of the five volunteer groups declared illegal in 1909.[64] Aswini Kumar was reported in the same year. His close associate, Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta, who had helped in the organization of the People's Association in Barisal, was an active leader in several militant svadeśī societies after 1905. He was Secretary of the Anti-Circular Society formed in November, 1905 to organize student resistance to the Carlyle Circular, and he traveled extensively in east Bengal urging student volunteers to spread the boycott movement.[65] In 1905 he also organized the Brati Samiti, another national volunteer society centered in Faridpur district in east Bengal, which was outlawed in 1909.[66] Manoranjan Guha-

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[64] Bengalee, November 15, 1905.

[65] Daily Hitavadi, September 8, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 900.

[66] Basumati, January 16, 1909, RNPB (1909), p. 103.

Thakurta had accumulated some wealth from mining mica in Giridhi and intelligence reports of the British government claimed that he was a financial supporter of the seditious *Nabaśakti* newspaper and the *Jugāntar* terrorist conspiracy in Calcutta.[67] Another Neo-*Vaiṣṇava* leader, Pramatha Mitra, founded the *Anuśīlan Samiti* in Calcutta in 1901-1902. This *Samiti* was at first a volunteer organization promoting physical fitness, but it later became the nucleus of the terrorist movement. The *Jugāntar* group which initiated the terrorist bombings in 1908 was an offshoot of the *Anuśīlan Samiti*, as was the *Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti*, a revolutionary terrorist group with an extensive organization in towns and villages of east Bengal, which was declared illegal in 1909.[68]

The fourth national volunteer society which was considered dangerous by the British government was the Mymensingh *Suhṛd Samiti*, which had grown out of a physical fitness movement organized by Sarala Ghoshal of the Tagore family. Sarala Ghoshal was a niece of Rabindranath and a granddaughter of Devendranath Tagore, founder of the *Ādi Brāhma Samāj*. She grew up in the liberated *Brāhma* atmosphere of the Tagore home, and received a B.A. from the

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[67] Ker, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

University of Calcutta.[69] She was apparently very much influenced by the patriotic spirit of the Tagores and the Ādi Brāhma circle which included Rajnarain Bose and Nabagopal Mitra, both of whom had been advocates of svarāj and svadeśī. Sarala Ghoshal came into contact with Swami Vivekananda and even made plans to accompany him on a trip to America and Europe to represent Indian womanhood.[70] In 1902 she was busy trying to establish a Hindu college for girls which would provide education for women on national lines.[71] Then in 1903 she organized a gymnasium in south Calcutta in which Bengali youths were trained in fencing and judo "by a professional swordsman named Murtaza."[72] This association also organized meetings to celebrate the deeds of Bengali heroes to stimulate feelings of national pride. In June, 1903 she called a meeting to celebrate the memory of Pratāpāditya and her followers gave demonstrations of sword and lathi play.[73] Later in the same year she called a meeting to celebrate the coming Durga pūja in which she appeared like

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[69]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[70]Sarala Ghoshal, Jībaner Jhaṛā Pātā (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, n.d.), pp. 160-162.

[71]Indian Mirror, May 2, 1902, RNEPB (1902), p. 194.

[72]Ker, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

[73]Sanjivani, June 4, 1903, RNPB (1903), p. 506. Pratāpāditya was a sixteenth century Bengali prince of Jessore district.

the Mother Goddess herself to her followers, urging them to become heroes of Bengal.[74] She seemed to be a reincarnation of the Mother Goddess urging her sons to battle, a theme popularized by Bankim Chandra's novels and Nivedita's Kali the Mother.

According to British intelligence reports the publicity given Sarala Ghoshal's movement resulted in a fad of gymnasiums for young men which later fed the national volunteer and terrorist movements. According to one report:

> Outside Calcutta Miss Ghoshal's influence was noted chiefly in Mymensingh and Dacca. She visited the former in April, 1905, and became patroness of the Surhid Samiti; before her visit this was a non-political body, but inspired by her enthusiasm it developed into a dangerous centre and had to be prescribed as an unlawful association in January, 1909. She also started two celebrations in Mymensingh imitating the Shivaji festivals held in the Maratha country . . . the hero of one of them being Pratapaditya . . . . Miss Ghoshal's connection with Dacca was less direct, but the head of the revolutionary society there, Pulin Behari Das, has been a pupil of her fencing master, Murtaza.[75]

Thus the national volunteer associations which served as the organizational focus of the militant svadeśī movement were closely associated with Neo-Hindu leaders, and several grew out of political associations established by these leaders prior to 1905. The organization of the national education phase of the svadeśī movement also had

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[74]Jyoti, October 15, 1903, RNPB (1903), p. 925. Basumati, October 17, 1903, RNPB (1903), p. 927.

[75]Ker, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

close connections with Neo-Hindu leadership. Satish Mukherjee's Dawn Society and Dawn magazine organized in the late nineties became the nucleus of the national movement. In late 1905 the Dawn Society was dismantled so that its members could devote all their time to the National Council of Education. Satish Mukherjee and his young followers formed a core of support for the National Council which created a National College and about fifty national schools in the districts of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore and several of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas were also active as initiators of the national education movement. The national education movement was closely interrelated with the svadeśī volunteer movement; the national schools were recruiting grounds for the samitis supporting svadeśī and terrorism.[76]

Neo-Hindu theory of modernization consonant with indigenous thought was a basic ingredient in militant political ideology. The demand for immediate independence and the strategy of bypassing and challenging British administration with a svadeśī program of self-help and self-development were justified by the Neo-Hindu claim that indigenous society was capable of independent progress. Prior to 1900 the chief spokesman for a militant political position were Neo-Hindu leaders whose activist interpretation of Hindu concepts provided a rationale for their conviction that Hindu society

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[76] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 71.

was capable of generating progress without British guidance.

In the eighties and nineties militant political ideology was attractive to only small circles among the Bengali elite. The formulation of Neo-Hindu activist religious ideology and indigenous modernization theory was not in itself sufficient catalyst to propel the Bengali elite from resentment of British administration to active participation in a militant political movement against British rule. Our study of the growth of the anti-partition agitation in the preceding pages makes it clear that the administration of Lord Curzon which threatened the political interests of the Bengali elite was the most important catalyst of the anti-partition agitation. Rapid growth of political sentiments of opposition to British rule between 1899 and 1905 resulted in greater interest in Neo-Hindu activist interpretations of Hindu concepts. During the same period small organizations established by Neo-Hindu leaders for educational or political projects expanded into large volunteer societies to further economic svadeśī, national education, or revolution. While political frustrations were the principal cause for the rapid spread of militant political thought and the outbreak of anti-partition agitation, the Neo-Hindu movement gave momentum to the anti-partition agitation by providing ideological and organizational bases for the movement. The societies formed by Neo-Hindu leaders were important as nuclei from which large svadeśī volunteer

and revolutionary groups were organized. Neo-Hindu concepts and interpretations of Hindu symbols and institutions were further elaborated into a political Vedānta ideology by militant politicians who led the anti-partition agitation.

The Political Vedānta of Aurobindo, Bipin Pal, and the Jugāntar Group

In order to mobilize support for their demand for independence and their program of boycott, militant leaders used a political Vedānta idiom which was an elaboration of the nationalist theories of Bankim Chandra and Swami Vivekananda.

According to Bankim Chandra Chatterji there are three stages leading to the development of love of God; love of self, love of family, and the higher stage of love of nation. He proposed that nationalism or love for one's countrymen would be the religion for India which would best stimulate material and moral progress. Since India lacked a strong indigenous tradition of nationalism the old religious symbols must be used to inculcate the new faith. Bankim Chandra used the symbol of Kālī as the symbol of motherland, and in Ānandamaṭh he suggested that the Hindu religious institution of sannyāsa could acquire new meaning in the concept of renunciation for service to the nation. Vivekananda added the doctrine of the spiritual character of Indian civilization and the special spiritual mission of India, to the nationalist theory developed by Bankim Chandra. He also

added a new dimension to the concept of activist sannyāsa by actually creating an organization of sannyāsins devoted to social service for national regeneration. Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta also provided a philosophical background for Bankim Chandra's use of Kālī as the symbol of the unity of the nation. According to Bankim Chandra the image of Śaktī or Kālī represented the total Śaktī of all members of the nation. Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta developed the theory that the divine is within each human soul and that God is equivalent to the sum total of all human souls. This provided a philosophical basis for the imagery of Kālī as the incarnation of the sum total of human souls constituting the nation. The theories of Bankim and Vivekananda were further elaborated by the leaders of the anti-partition agitation, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Pal, and the Jugāntar group.

The most important theoretician of the 1905 anti-partition movement in Bengal was Aurobindo Ghosh, who formulated a political Vedānta ideology. Aurobindo Ghosh, born in 1872, was the son of a Kāyastha medical doctor with Brāhma leanings, who had married a daughter of Rajnarain Bose, leader of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj. His father had great admiration for English culture and the English character, and he believed that Anglicization was the only answer for India. The children were encouraged to speak English even when quite small. In 1879, when Aurobindo was seven, the family went to England. His father and mother and the younger child-

ren returned to India, but Aurobindo and his two elder brothers remained in England for their education. Aurobindo went to King's College at Cambridge and passed the Indian Civil Service examination, but he failed to show up for the riding test so he was disqualified.[77] Later in life Aurobindo recalled that he did not find life in England congenial. He was repulsed by the efforts of a family with whom he was staying to convert him to Christianity and he developed a strong dislike for Christian missionaries and Christian bigotry. While he was a student in England he became interested in the Indian Nationalist movement, and joined a secret society which advocated Indian independence.[78]

Upon his return to India in 1892, Aurobindo took a position in the Baroda state service in western India. The next year he began to write a series of articles called "New Lamps for Old" which attacked the moderate politics of the Indian National Congress. These articles, published in 1893 and 1894 in the Indu Prakash, showed a great deal of political insight. Aurobindo analyzed Indian politics in terms of interest groups. Indian politics, he wrote, is the politics of a middle class caught "between a strong and unfeeling bureaucracy and an inert and imbecile proletariat."[79]

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[77] A. B. Purani, The Life of Sri Aurobindo: A Source Book, pp. 30-35.

[78] Ibid., p. 42.

[79] Indu Prakash, February 5, 1894.

He used the term "middle class" interchangeably with "English educated few," clearly recognising that the middle class "are not and cannot be a body of disinterested patriots," and that the political struggle involves the striving of the middle class "to possess itself of rank, consideration and power."[80] Aurobindo was mainly concerned with the political strategy that should be adopted by the middle class. He believed that their dependence on the British for gradual extension of political rights was unrealistic, because the British bureaucracy was fundamentally unsympathetic to middle class aspirations. Since he had no faith that the British intended to encourage the gradual growth of self-government in India, he decided that the middle class were in fundamental opposition to the British bureaucracy and called for an attempt to arouse support among the "masses." The point was that if the middle class were to win any political concessions from the British they must broaden their political base.[81] Thus, from the start of his career Aurobindo was aware that the separation of the English-educated elite from the rest of the population was a political liability. In his own case the alienation was strikingly apparent; when he arrived in India he could not fluently read and write

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Indu Prakash, August 7, 1893.

Bengali or any other Indian tongue.[82] He felt that the anglicized political style of the English-educated in Bengal and elsewhere contributed to the gap between the elite and the rest of the populace. In the Indu Prakash articles he derided the imitation of British politics as unsuitable to Indian conditions. He attacked the policy of constitutional agitation and faith in gradual constitutional development on the English model as unrealistic in a country ruled by a colonial power.[83] He suggested that India should look to the example of France and the French revolution instead of always trying to imitate English political development.[84] His suggestion of imitation of the French shows that he was already attracted to the idea of violent revolution, but he had not as yet arrived at an idea of an indigenous style of politics.

In mid-1894, Aurobindo wrote a series of articles on Bankim Chandra Chatterji for Indu Prakash. This was the first indication of Aurobindo's interest in the Hindu religious reform movements. He wrote of Bankim, "He was the first to revolt against the shortcomings of Hinduism, and he is the first who has attempted to give some shape to that

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[82] Purani, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[83] *Indu Prakash*, August 7, 1893.

[84] *Indu Prakash*, November 13, 1893.

new Hinduism, which one feels, has a religious destiny."[85] At this stage Aurobindo did not seem to be aware of the political potential of the new Hindu doctrines. His interest in the Hindu reform movement was at first primarily personal. As an individual he had never felt himself to be part of the English society in which he grew up, and he described his return to India in 1892 as a deep emotional experience.[86] He desired to identify with India which was difficult because he had been brought up in a different culture. The first decade he was in India, Aurobindo spent his free time studying Indian languages and literature. He wrote translations of several Sanskrit and Bengali classics.[87] For Aurobindo this seems to have been a personal search to identify with Indian cultural tradition since he had rejected the English cultural tradition for personal and political reasons. It is possible that the example of Tilak first stimulated Aurobindo to think about the use of religious symbols in politics. Between 1892 and 1906 Aurobindo worked in the Baroda state service in western India,[88] and he was very much aware of the political activities of the Maratha leader,

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[85] Indu Prakash, August 27, 1894.

[86] Purani, op. cit., p. 44.

[87] Ibid., pp. 52-62.

[88] Ibid.

Tilak. In an appreciation of Tilak written in 1918, Aurobindo wrote that his greatest contribution was the creation of a political movement with appeal outside of the English-educated few by uniting religion with politics. According to Aurobindo, "What was done then by Mr. Tilak in Maharashtra has been initiated for all India by the Swadeshi movement."[89] To create a new style of politics suitable to Bengal, Aurobindo later turned to the thought of the Hindu reform movements of his own province.

Aurobindo began his efforts to organize a political movement in Bengal in 1899. He sent Jatin Banerji and his younger brother, Barindra Ghosh, to make contacts with revolutionary elements. In 1903, Aurobindo visited Bengal and set up a revolutionary council of five to coordinate the various secret societies in Bengal, but this attempt at unification was not successful.[90] In 1905, Aurobindo and his brother wrote and privately published Bhawani Mandir (Temple of the Mother). This pamphlet, which was widely distributed among nationalist secret societies, called for the creation of a new order of sannyāsins devoted to the nationalist movement.[91] In 1906 Aurobindo took leave from

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[89]Aurobindo Ghosh, Bankim--Tilak--Dayananda (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1955), p. 19.

[90]Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1953), pp. 65-66.

[91]Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 67.

his post in Baroda. He attended the Bengal Provincial Congress, and afterwards toured east Bengal with Bipin Pal to appeal for support for the svadeśī movement.[92] In August, 1906 Aurobindo became principal of the Bengal National College, the central institution of the national education program. He was somewhat disappointed with the moderate policy of the college because he had envisioned the college as a center of nationalist activism as well as an experimental school.[93] In late 1905 Aurobindo joined Bipin Pal in editing the Bande Mataram newspaper which became the mouthpiece of the Extremist party. In 1906 after Bipin Pal left the paper, Aurobindo became the chief editor.[94]

In the Bande Mataram Aurobindo proclaimed that the goal of the nationalist movement should be independence for India, and he attacked the moderate strategy of merely asking for a greater share in the government of the country.[95] Aurobindo contrasted the doubts of the moderates about India's capability to govern herself, with the certainty of the militants that a free and independent India would herald

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[92] Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother, p. 49.

[93] Bande Mataram, April 15, 1907.

[94] Purani, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

[95] Bande Mataram, April 10, 1907.

the awakening of a great civilization.[96] In a series of articles in April 1907 in the Bande Mataram, Aurobindo called for the widening of the svadeśī movement to a general movement of passive resistance. He rejected the constitutional agitation of the nineteenth century as a fundamental miscalculation of the nature of British rule. He believed that the British government was an entrenched bureaucracy which would yield only to pressure. The program of constitutional agitation, or even the svadeśī program of self-help and self-development, cannot succeed because they do not put sufficient pressure on the bureaucracy. Many svadeśī supporters, such as Rabindranath Tagore, supported the movement for economic self-development but rejected boycott as a negative and coercive tactic. Aurobindo argued that such scruples are naive. Economic self-development can never succeed unless pressure is exerted against British economic control through a boycott of British goods.[97] Aurobindo went further and suggested that the concept of boycott should be extended to include total non-cooperation with the British administration.[98]

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[96] Bande Mataram, April 26, 1907.

[97] Bande Mataram, April 13, 1907.

[98] Aurobindo gave this explanation of the passive resistance program: "We would not only buy our own goods, but boycott British goods; not only have our own schools, but boycott Government institutions; not only erect our own Arbitration Courts, but boycott bureaucratic justice; not

Aurobindo felt that it was necessary to capture the organizational apparatus of the Indian National Congress before a passive resistance program could be effectively organized.[99] Within the Extremist faction in Bengal he urged that an effort should be made to dislodge moderate control of Congress. When the Bengal Provincial Congress was held in December, 1907, in Midnapore, Aurobindo played an important role in the organization of the Extremist wing which met separately to draft an Extremist program to be presented at the Indian National Congress meeting in Surat.[100] In the absence of Bipin Pal who was in jail, Aurobindo led the Bengali Extremists in the Surat session in December, 1907. His uncompromising stand contributed to the final split.[101]

Aurobindo advocated passive resistance because he believed it was a feasible tactic for a public political movement, not because he disapproved of violence. On the

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only organize our league of defence, but have nothing to do with the bureaucratic Executive except when we cannot avoid it. At present even in Bengal where Boycott is universally accepted, it is confined to the boycott of British goods and is aimed at the British merchant and only indirectly at the British bureaucrat. We would aim it directly both at the British merchant and at the British bureaucrat who stands behind and makes possible exploitation by the merchant." Bande Mataram, April 23, 1907.

[99]Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother, p. 47.

[100]Purani, op. cit., p. 105.

[101]Amales Tripathi, op. cit., pp. 131-132.

contrary, he believed that a nation has the right to fight for freedom using any means whether violent or non-violent. While he was publicly trying to mobilize support for a passive resistance movement he maintained contact with secret revolutionary societies, particularly Barindra Ghosh's radical revolutionary group associated with the paper Jugāntar.[102] In May, 1908, Barindra Ghosh and his associates were arrested and later convicted of a terrorist bombing. Two English ladies were killed in the terrorist bombing which had been aimed to end the life of Magistrate Kingsford.[103] Aurobindo was also tried but acquitted for lack of evidence. However, in view of his close association with the Jugāntar group, he was undoubtedly aware of their terrorist plans and to some extent involved. One of the members of the Anuśīlan Samiti

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[102]Aurobindo described his role in the third person singular: "Afterwards there came the partition of Bengal and a general outburst of revolt which favoured the rise of the extremist party and the great nationalist movement. Sri Aurobindo's activities were then turned more and more in this direction and the secret action became a secondary and subordinate element. He took advantage, however, of the Swadeshi movement to popularise the idea of violent revolt in the future. At Barin's suggestion he agreed to the starting of a paper, Yugantar, which was to preach open revolt and the absolute denial of the British rule and include such items as a series of articles containing instructions for guerilla warfare. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote some of the opening articles in the early numbers and he always exercised a general control . . . ." Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother, pp. 43-44.

[103]Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 23.

later wrote that Aurobindo had been a member of the revolutionary tribunal which sentenced Magistrate Kingsford to death.[104]

Aurobindo was in jail a year before he was acquitted and released. When he came out of jail in May, 1909, he found that the atmosphere of the country had changed and the nationalist enthusiasm had ebbed. He started a periodical, the Karmayogin, but he began to turn more and more to spiritual concerns. In late 1909, fearing that he would be again arrested, he left for the French territory of Chandergore, and in 1910 he left for Pondicherry, a small piece of French territory south of Madras. For a while he thought of re-entering the nationalist movement, but eventually he decided that his destiny was to be a religious leader.[105]

While Aurobindo was active in the nationalist movement he used religious symbols and a religious theory of nationalism to mobilize political support. His religious theory of nationalism was a more comprehensive creed than had been developed by Bankim Chandra or Vivekananda. Aurobindo developed Vivekananda's Neo-Vedānta concept that God is the sum total of all human souls into a more elaborate

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[104]Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, Biplabī Jībaner Smṛti (Memoirs of Revolutionary Life) (Calcutta: Indian Associated Publishing Co., 1962), p. 96.

[105]Purani, op. cit., pp. 133, 137, 140.

theory that God is incarnated in individuals, in humanity in general, and in communities of humanity. Thus, Aurobindo advanced the concept of the nation itself as an incarnation of God which had not been clearly expressed by either Vivekananda or Bankim Chandra.[106] The incarnation of God in the nation is identified with the Goddess Kālī in Aurobindo's thought. In Bhawani Mandir he wrote that each human soul contains the divine Śaktī (energy) and the nation is a mighty Śaktī composed of the Śaktīs of all the millions of units which make up the nation. The great Śaktī which is the nation is identified with the Goddess, Kālī.[107]

Aurobindo also utilized the concept of the spiritual mission of India developed by Vivekananda. In the Bande Mataram he argued that a free and independent India was necessary for the spiritual salvation of humanity.[108] According to Aurobindo, India was destined to enlighten the world with a spiritual message that will save mankind. He envisioned this great spiritual message as a new synthesis of Vedānta. Samkara, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda had given valuable interpretations of Vedānta, but a new synthesis of Vedānta embracing all life and action in its scope would be

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[106] Aurobindo Ghosh, Bhawani Mandir (The Temple of the Mother), as reprinted in Purani, op. cit., p. 79.

[107] Ibid., pp. 77, 81-82.

[108] Bande Mataram, March 28, 1908. Bande Mataram, April 7, 1908.

the culmination of the reawakening of India.[109] According to Aurobindo, the political independence of India was necessary for this reawakening, but the ultimate aim was the development of the Vedāntic mission to save humanity.[110] Aurobindo thus developed the Neo-Hindu defense of Hindu culture and thought to the farthest degree. He claimed not only that progress could be achieved within the framework of indigenous thought and culture, but that development of indigenous Indian thought was necessary for the progress of the entire human race.

There is ample evidence that Aurobindo regarded himself as the prophet of Indian nationalism and India's spiritual mission. He had begun to study yoga in 1904, and he was initiated by a religious teacher, Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, in 1907.[111] A letter written by Aurobindo to his wife in 1905 indicates that he already saw himself as an instrument

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[109] In Bhawani Mandir Aurobindo wrote: " . . . among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophy and make mankind one soul . . . . It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagawan Ramakrishna came and Vivekananda preached." Purani, op. cit., p. 80.

[110] Karmayogin, June 19, 1909.

[111] Purani, op. cit., p. 108.

of divine will, and his actions in the nationalist movement as part of a divine plan.[112] In an article in Bande Mataram in 1907 he referred to his national ideology as "political Vedantism."[113] In 1908 he wrote that, "The new religion of Nationalism is a creed indeed, a faith which already numbers its martyrs, which speaks through inspired voices."[114] Aurobindo claimed to have had spiritual revelations while in prison in 1908-1909. Upon his release he spoke as a religious nationalist prophet.[115]

Aurobindo's political *Vedānta* involved the use of *Śakta* symbols. The Mother Goddess, Kālī, symbolized the mother country or nation. The worship of God incarnated in the nation is identified with the worship of Kālī in Auro-

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[112] Aurobindo wrote a letter to his wife dated August 30, 1905, in which he tried to explain his involvement in the nationalist movement: "Whereas others regard the country as an inert object, and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and rivers, I look upon my country as the Mother, I worship and adore her as the Mother. What would a son do when a demon sitting on the breast of his mother is drinking her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals, and go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he, rather, run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race . . . . This is not a new feeling within me, it is not of recent origin, I was born with it, it is my very marrow, God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission." Purani, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[113] *Bande Mataram*, April 23, 1907.

[114] *Bande Mataram*, April 19, 1908.

[115] Aurobindo Ghosh, "The Present Situation," *Speeches of Aurobindo* (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1948), p. 6.

bindo's Bhawani Mandir as it was in Bankim Chandra's Ānandamaṭh.[116] Aurobindo also drew upon the legend of Kālī as the creative energy (Śaktī) of the eternal unchangeable Brahmaṇ. Kālī, the Mother, to Aurobindo is the incarnation of strength and activity, the power of creation and destruction. Like Vivekananda, Aurobindo pictured India sunk into inertia, her civilization dormant due to lack of energy and daring. In Aurobindo's thought Kālī became the symbol of energetic activity necessary to revive India from her torpor.[117] In Bhawani Mandir Aurobindo wrote: "In the present age, the Mother is manifested as the mother of strength. She is pure Shakti to answer the need of India for creative energy and strength."[118]

Aurobindo also adapted the Hindu institution of sannyāsa to the purpose of nationalist organization. Like Vivekananda he interpreted sannyāsa as renunciation of personal ties and material desires for active service. In Bhawani Mandir he proposed that a temple of Kālī be built with a new order of sannyāsins devoted to action in the service of the nation. Renunciation of family life was to

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[116] Purani, op. cit., p. 99.

[117] Ibid., p. 75.

[118] Ibid., p. 78. Aurobindo's stress on the need for strength in Bhawani Mandir is reminiscent of Vivekananda's doctrine that religion is strength. The identification of Kālī with activity and strength is similar to the concept of Kālī in Nivedita's Kali the Mother.

be required of the nationalist sannyāsins.[119] He urged young men to refrain from marriage because feelings of domestic love and devotion would interfere with dedication to the nationalist cause.[120] In Vivekananda's philosophy sannyāsa was renunciation of personal ties to work for betterment of humanity, while Aurobindo like Nivedita proposed a new order of sannyāsins specifically devoted to the nationalist movement. They were to seek God through active service of the nation, an incarnation of God. As a whole, Aurobindo's religious nationalism was an explicitly political version of Neo-Vedānta. He himself coined the term "political Vedanta." The philosophic foundation of his nationalist ideology was in the Neo-Vedānta religious doctrine, and the symbols he used were Śakta symbols.

Aurobindo's religious nationalism was in part a solution to his own problem of finding a cultural identity, and in part a solution to the problem of a politician seeking to develop a political style. As a politician trying to mobilize support in Bengal, Aurobindo faced a peculiar problem of communication. He was a Bengali who had lived most of his life outside Bengal, and he was not fluent in the Bengali language. Of course, if his object had been only

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[119] Purani, op. cit., pp. 82-84.

[120] Bande Mataram, October 4, 1907.

to mobilize the English-educated elite this might not have been an obstacle. But, Aurobindo had decided as early as 1893 that the English-educated few must broaden their political base to effectively press for concessions from the British.

Aurobindo believed that the group which he called the "middle class" or the "English-educated few" must be the vanguard of any progressive political movement. In an article in the Bande Mataram in 1907 he pictured the middle class as a creation of British rule which the British had then come to fear. The power of the new middle class was centered in the bar, the press, the municipal boards, and the educational system. According to Aurobindo the British, fearing the growing power of this middle class, had tried to officialize the municipal government and the university, intimidate the press, and divide the new class by partitioning Bengal in order to reduce their influence. Aurobindo stated that the anti-partition agitation was a reaction of the middle class to the efforts of the British bureaucracy to undermine their power. But he identified the interests of the middle class with the interests of the nation as a whole, because the middle class was the only group capable of leading the nation in a progressive direction.[121]

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[121] Bande Mataram, May 2, 1907.

At the same time he believed that the middle class must have a broad base of political support or be crushed by the British bureaucracy.[122] But which groups in Bengali society did Aurobindo desire to mobilize to his programs of passive resistance and revolution, and why did he use a religious theory of nationalism and religious symbols?

Aurobindo wrote of the necessity of mass participation in politics, but actually his attitude toward the masses was quite ambivalent. He wrote that the Extremist party was for democracy and the awakening of the masses.[123] He realized that the political upheaval necessary to establish Indian independence might also very well cause a social upheaval.[124] But when there were signs of real mass unrest among the Muslims and Namaśūdras in east Bengal he became alarmed. After the riots at Jamalpur he urged the Hindus to organize resistance to the Muslims who were in league with the British.[125] At other times he wrote of the need to cultivate a feeling of brotherhood with the Muslim masses but he advanced no practical program to do so.[126] In an article written in 1908 Aurobindo expressed the fear that

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[122] Ibid.

[123] Bande Mataram, March 25, 1908.

[124] Bande Mataram, March 2, 1908.

[125] Bande Mataram, May 25, 1907.

[126] Bande Mataram, March 19, 1908.

upper caste Hindus may be on the decline and the Muslims may inherit the future. He wrote that the Hindus in the towns in government service and the professions should be careful not to become isolated from their rural roots and lose the leadership of the rural masses.[127] He thought in terms of strengthening the ties between the urban elite and the rural landed upper castes. He regarded the small landlords, for the most part upper-caste Hindus, as natural allies of the English-educated professional upper-caste Hindus in the city and towns in the struggle against the British. In an article on the strategy of passive resistance Aurobindo argued against the idea of a campaign to refuse to pay the land tax, which might have appealed to the Muslim and Namuśūdra cultivators. According to Aurobindo a refusal to pay land rent in Bengal "would injure not a landlord class supported by the alien, but a section of our own countrymen who have been intolerably harrassed, depressed and burdened by bureaucratic policy and bureaucratic exactions and fully sympathizying for the most part, with the national movement."[128] Aurobindo was not willing to jeopardize support from the rural landed upper castes by pressing a no-tax campaign which might have been popular among Muslims and

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[127] Bande Mataram, March 6, 1908.

[128] Bande Mataram, April 23, 1907.

lower caste Hindus. He wanted the English-educated elite to mobilize the larger upper caste group who were influential in the countryside. Apparently he thought that politically mobilized rural landlords would be able to obtain the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the cultivators.

In terms of the political mobilization of the rural upper castes Aurobindo's political Vedānta and his use of Śakta symbolism made political sense. The upper castes as a whole were Śaktas and they accepted the Vedānta philosophical outlook. Aurobindo's political Vedānta integrated the nationalist political outlook of the English-educated elite with religious symbols and institutions which had an appeal to the rural upper castes as well. Aurobindo's political Vedānta was an attempt by a politician, who was himself Anglicized, to develop an indigenous political style which would have appeal to the rural as well as the urban upper castes.

Bipin Pal, the other important leader of the Extremist party in Bengal, had a rather different political background. Whereas in the early nineties Aurobindo had advocated the expansion of the political base of the English-educated elite, Bipin Pal had advocated that politics should be restricted to this elite. In 1887 he had supported Sir Auckland Colvin who had warned that it would be a dangerous policy for the Indian National Congress to try to draw the masses into the movement. Bipin Pal favored a restriction

of politics to the English-educated class and he regarded British rule as a divine dispensation. In later years he explained that he had been afraid that if India returned to Hindu or Muslim rule the new life of personal freedom made possible under British rule would disappear.[129] He was a strong advocate of the constitutional moderate strategy of petitioning and protest, and appeal to the British sense of justice.

As late as 1902 Bipin Pal still referred to British rule as the fulfillment of a divine purpose.[130] In the New India newspaper which he established in 1901 he opposed Curzon's municipal government and educational measures, but he expressed his opposition in loyal tones until 1904 when his point of view changed. He wrote in 1904, "The belief that England will of her own free will help Indians out of their long established civil servitude and establish those free institutions of government which she herself values so much was once cherished but all hope has now been abandoned."[131] After partition Bipin Pal declared himself in favor of svarāj, and in 1907 he defined svarāj to mean complete independence rather than self-government in the

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[129] Bipin Pal, Memories of My Life and Times, Vol. II (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, Ltd., 1951), pp. 51-52.

[130] New India, June 26, 1902.

[131] New India, December 21, 1904, RNEPB (1905), p. 17.

empire.[132] In 1905 he declared that constitutional agitation had failed because the Curzon government was autocratic as the government of the Russian Czar, and new political tactics were needed.[133] He supported the svadeśī movement, and together with Aurobindo he called for a wider movement of passive resistance. In late 1906 he called for an end to the domination of Congress by the English-educated few, especially the end of the domination of a small clique of lawyers.[134]

The timing of this change in Bipin Pal's political views shows that the policies of the Curzon administration were the most important factor. While his political views were growing militant he began to express a Neo-Hindu ideology which provided a rationale for the conversion of his old opposition to the tyranny of orthodox Hinduism to his new opposition to the tyranny of British rule. As pointed out in Chapter Five he had become a disciple of Bijoy Krishna Goswami in the nineties but he did not begin to articulate Neo-Vaiṣṇava ideas until 1903 when he defended Vaiṣṇavism in a speech before the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj as a faith compatible with the progress of Indian society. His argument that

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[132] Bipin Pal, "The Gospel of Swaraj" (speech given in Madras, 1907) Swadeshi and Swaraj (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, 1954), p. 162.

[133] New India, September 9, 1905, RNEPB (1905), p. 332.

[134] Bande Mataram, September 17, 1906.

Hindu tradition contained progressive elements provided a rationale for his new conviction that a modern Indian polity could be created independent from British influence. Moreover, as his faith in Hindu tradition increased he discarded his previous position that only those with English education should participate in politics.

Bipin Pal began to play an active role in the svadeśī movement in 1905 when he became a frequent speaker at protest meetings in Calcutta. He urged boycott of British goods and the official university system.[135] When the Carlyle Circular forbidding student participation in political demonstrations was issued by the government, Bipin Pal urged students to resist. In May, 1906 he toured East Bengal and Assam to mobilize support for the svadeśī movement.[136] In August 1906 he organized the English newspaper, Bande Mataram (Hail to the Mother) which advocated passive resistance. He later left the paper due to a difference of opinion with the other members of the editorial board. Aurobindo and the other editors were connected with secret revolutionary societies to prepare for violent revolution

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[135] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Bipin Chandra Pal and India's Struggle for Swaraj (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958), pp. 34, 96.

[136] Amales Tripathi, op. cit., p. 129.

which Bipin Pal did not support.[137] Bipin Pal led the Bengali Extremist faction which supported Tilak's candidacy for President of the Indian Nationalist Congress in 1906.[138] After the Congress, Bipin Pal put most of his energy into speaking tours in east Bengal and Madras asking for support for the boycott effort. The British authorities blamed the student disturbances that broke out in Madras after his departure on his message of svarāj.[139] His lectures in Madras clarified his position on passive resistance. He challenged the moderates' claim that the nationalist movement should restrict itself to constitutional agitation because the British government was a constitutional government. Bipin Pal countered by pointing out that a constitutional government must make provision for the expression of the opinions of the people through government institutions. Since this was not the case in India, he argued that the slogan of constitutional agitation was irrelevant. He went on to say that the nationalist movement should only restrict itself to legal means as long as government laws respect the rights of citizens.[140] In August, 1907 Bipin Pal was called

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[137] Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother, pp. 51-52.

[138] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Bipin Chandra Pal and India's Struggle for Swaraj, pp. 67-68.

[139] Ker, op. cit., pp. 11-13.

[140] Bipin Pal, "The New Movement" (speech given in Madras in 1907), Swadeshi and Swaraj, pp. 117-148.

to testify in the sedition trial of Aurobindo Ghosh in connection with some articles in the Bande Mataram. When Bipin Pal refused to testify against Aurobindo he was sentenced to six months for contempt of court.[141] After he came out of jail he stressed the religious meaning of nationalism in his speeches. Following the deportation of other prominent militant leaders, Bipin Pal left India and sailed to England in 1908.[142]

Bipin Pal, like Aurobindo, used religious symbols to mobilize support for the program of passive resistance. Although his own background was Vaiṣṇava, and he had begun to articulate a Neo-Vaiṣṇava ideology in 1903, his nationalist ideology was defined in Śakta symbols during the anti-partition agitation. In 1905, shortly after he had founded the Bande Mataram he explained the significance of the phrase, "Bande Mātaram." He referred to Bankim Chandra's Ānandamaṭh as the source of the idea that the nation is the incarnation of Śaktī, the Mother. According to Bipin Pal, "Kali has been interpreted in Anandamath as the symbol of the Motherland, and in this interpretation the old mythology and the new patriotism stand absolutely reconciled."[143] In

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141 Bande Mataram, August 28, 1907.

142 Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, Bipin Chandra Pal and India's Struggle for Swaraj, p. 108.

143 Bipin Pal, "Mataram in Bande Mataram," as reprinted in The New Spirit (Calcutta: 1907), pp. 75-79.

speeches made on the occasion of the Durga Pūjā of 1905, Bipin Chandra referred to Durga as the representation of the nation spirit.[144] In May, 1907 he gave a speech in Calcutta which urged the use of Kālī pūjās to popularize the national movement. He referred to Bankim Chandra's identification of Kālī with the motherland and he also suggested that Kālī is the symbol of struggle and activism necessary to awaken the Indian people out of inertia.[145] A portion of his speech outlining plans for political mobilization appeared in English translation in the New India:

> I would therefore recommend the organization of Kali Puja in every important village, every new moon day. It cannot be the ordinary Kali Puja. For these pujas have no sanction except on special ceremonial days or for specific purposes. But we have the tradition of Kali worship whenever there are epidemics and troubles in the country . . . . But then it is not the ordinary Kali, but what is called Rakshakali that is worshipped in these times of trouble. Rakshakali is the Kali which protects from evil. Rakshakali is not black but white--the symbol not of darkness but of light. And the sacrifices acceptable to Rakshakali are white goats and not black ones. It would not be a bad thing if we could organize public Rakshakali pujas at the present juncture where large crowds could be collected, and 108 goats sacrificed. It would put courage into drooping hearts. It would impart a religious meaning and significance to our national movements. It would help to revive faith in the supernatural, and thus remove any demoralisation that may have set in among the people. Will the bureaucracy demoralise us, or shall we demoralise them; that is the question now. They are trying to

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[144] Bipin Pal, "Durga Puja" (speech given in October, 1905), The New Spirit, p. 89.

[145] Ker, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

> demoralise us. We too may perplex and demoralise them by the organisation of these pujas . . . . They are still thinking of the mysterious chapatis. It is not difficult to demoralise such people. These Rakshakali pujas will have a healthy effect on them. The very mystery of it will demoralise them. And thus these ceremonials would strengthen the determination of our people on the one hand, and simultaneously demoralise those that are trying to repress them on the other.[146]

Apparently, Bipin Pal, like Bankim Chandra Chatterji, believed that nationalism could not be inculcated in the Indian populace without the use of religious symbols. It is interesting that both these leaders chose to utilize *Śakta* symbols although they were both *Vaiṣṇavas*. Bipin Pal's main activity during the *svadeśī* movement was speaking tours to arouse support for the *svadeśī* movement in east Bengal. According to British reports his oratory was very successful in arousing nationalist enthusiasm.[147] East Bengal had a high concentration of upper castes in both rural and urban areas, almost all of whom were *Śakta*. It seems probable that Bipin Pal was trying to mobilize support for the Extremist group in Calcutta among the rural upper castes. He followed Aurobindo's lead and spoke of *Vedāntic* nationalism. In a speech given in 1907 he proclaimed that the movement for Indian freedom is not merely political, it is a spiritual mission. India must develop the supreme message of *Vedānta*

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[146] *New India*, June 6, 1907, as cited in Ker, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[147] Ker, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

and deliver it to the world.[148] In 1908 he spoke of the stages of the incarnation of God in the individual, humanity and in communities of humanity, and concluded that the nation is God and the nationalist movement has a great spiritual purpose.[149] This type of religious nationalism was almost identical to Aurobindo's political Vedānta. Bipin Pal spoke of the divinity within each man which was a Neo-Vedānta concept and used Kālī to symbolize the nation.

Later, Bipin Pal seems to have been dissatisfied with Vedāntic nationalism and he developed a religious nationalism consonant with his Neo-Vaiṣṇava faith. His version of Vaiṣṇava nationalism was advanced after he had retired from active participation in the svadeśī movement. In his book Soul of India, published in 1911, he wrote that the Indian nation may be thought of as an incarnation of Rādhā in Vaiṣṇava thought or as Kālī in the Śakta tradition.[150] This was the first attempt to develop a nationalist symbol in the terminology of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa faith of Bengal. Bipin Pal also worked out a theory of nationalism in Vaiṣṇava terminology. He still held that nationalism in

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148 Bipin Pal, "The New Movement," Swadeshi and Swaraj, pp. 117-148.

149 Aurobindo Ghosh, "A Great Message," Bande Mataram, March 12, 1908.

150 Bipin Pal, The Soul of India (Calcutta: Choudhury and Choudhury, 1911), pp. 152-153.

India was a movement with divine inspiration for the realisation of the special spiritual mission of India. But he then identified this spiritual mission with the message of Chaitanya and Sri Kṛṣṇa which he called the higher stage of Vaiṣṇava Vedānta.[151] Moreover, he translated Vivekananda's concept that each human soul is divine and that God exists in humanity in Vaiṣṇava terms. According to Bipin Pal the Vaiṣṇava deity, Nārāyana, an aspect of Viṣṇu, is incarnated in humanity.[152] He also translated Aurobindo's concept that the nation as a human community is a divine incarnation into Vaiṣṇava terms. According to Bipin Pal the Vaiṣṇava deity Nārāyana is incarnated in humanity, as the sum total of human consciousness, while different aspects of this consciousness are incarnated in different nations.[153] This is essentially a repetition of Aurobindo's religious theory of nationalism, with Nārāyana replacing Kālī.

It would be difficult to interpret Bipin Pal's Vaiṣṇava nationalism as a bid for political support from the Vaiṣṇava lower castes in Bengal. His Vaiṣṇava nationalism was expressed after he had retired from political activity.

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[151]Bipin Pal, Europe Asks: Who is Sri Krishna? (Calcutta: The New India Printing and Publishing Co., 1939), p. 54.

[152]Bipin Pal, Indian Nationalism: Principles and Personalities (Madras: S. R. Murthy and Co., 1918, 1948).

[153]Bipin Pal, Europe Asks: Who is Sri Krishna? p. 45.

While he was politically active he used Aurobindo's Vedāntic nationalism and Śakta symbols. The identification of the nation with Rādhā was never popularized. The later Nārāyana theory of nationalism was an intellectual construction with little relation to the actual Vaiṣṇava cult of the Bengali lower castes. Bipin Pal, who was himself a Vaiṣṇava, may have later wished to make nationalism understandable in terms of the symbols of his own personal religious culture.

The terrorist groups in Bengal also developed a political Vedānta ideology. Although the Anuśīlan Samiti had been founded by a Neo-Vaiṣṇava (Pramatha Mitra) who had been a disciple of Bijoy Krishna Goswami, the revolutionary ideology of this organization and its branches was expressed in the idiom of political Vedānta stressing Śakta symbolism. The program of the Anuśīlan Samiti which was founded in 1901-1902, included a gymnasium for boxing and sword practice, and a weekly "morals class" including readings in Bankim Chandra's Ānandamaṭh and the letters and speeches of Vivekananda.[154] The Anuśīlan Samiti was not a secret society at this time, and it was supported by many prominent leaders of the English-educated elite in Calcutta.[155] The young members visited Swami Vivekananda regularly at Belur Maṭh, and Sister Nivedita and Swami Saradananda of the Ramakrishna

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[154] Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., p. 190.

[155] Jogesh Chatterji, In Search of Freedom, p. 4.

Mission lectured to the Anuśīlan Samiti.[156]

Aurobindo's friend, Jatindranath Banerji and his younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, came to Bengal from Baroda with the idea of trying to organize a revolutionary movement. They joined the Anuśīlan Samiti, but they were not able to convert P. Mitra and the others to the idea of revolution immediately.[157] However, from 1903 the Samiti began to drift in the direction of a program of revolutionary preparation. Jatindranath Banerji instituted a program of military training and the members began to read and discuss revolutionary movements and techniques used in other countries. Sister Nivedita donated a set of books about revolutionary movements in Ireland, Italy, and America.[158] At this time the Anuśīlan Samiti membership was drawn mainly from students in Calcutta. It began to spread to other parts of Bengal only after 1905.[159]

The first move toward a terrorist program was made by a group within the Anuśīlan Samiti led by Barindra Kumar Ghosh. Aurobindo and Barindra published the pamphlet Bhawani Mandir in 1905 which called for the organization of

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[156] Jadugopal Mukhopadyay, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[158] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[159] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

a group of sannyāsins who would dedicate their lives to the deliverance of the mother country. In late 1906 Barindra decided to establish a Bengali newspaper to propagate the idea of revolution. The new newspaper, which was able to survive for almost two years due to the leniency of censorship laws, was called Jugāntar (the new age).[160] The editorial board included Barindra Ghosh, Abinash Bhattacharji, Upendranath Banerji, and Bhupendranath Datta, the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda.[101] In the beginning of 1908, before it was closed because of censorship, the Jugāntar achieved a circulation of 20,000 or more.[162]

The Jugāntar newspaper expressed the revolutionary ideology of the terrorists. According to the Jugāntar foreign rule was the sole cause of India's degradation. Political freedom was necessary before any consideration of social reform or economic development, because foreign rule was the main obstacle to the development of Indian society. The Jugāntar group regarded British administration and commerce as fundamentally exploitative and antithetical to

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[160]Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother, pp. 43-44.

[161]Rowlatt Sedition Report, pp. 14-15. See also Upendranath Banerji, Memoirs of a Revolutionary (Calcutta: 1923), p. 7.

[162]Upendranath Banerji, op. cit., p. 8. According to James Campbell Ker the Jugāntar's circulation reached 7,000 in 1907 and "rapidly rose to a much higher figure." Ker, op. cit., p. 83.

Indian progress.[163]

The Jugāntar newspaper proclaimed that it would not be difficult to overthrow British rule if a sufficient number of Indians could be committed to a program of action. The Jugāntar reminded fellow countrymen that the number of Englishmen in all of India was no more than fifteen thousand. If the majority of Indians were firmly resolved, the overthrow of British rule could be accomplished in one day.[164] But the terrorists believed that British rule would only yield to force; they had no faith in non-violent pressure.[165] They believed that the rebirth of India must be preceded by a period of violent upheaval.[166] The name Jugāntar literally means the new age, but it also suggests the dissolution of the end of an age prior to rebirth.[167] The Jugāntar group preached that the greatness of a nation is born in war rather than in peace. They believed that a cult of strength and violence was necessary to shock Indian civili-

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[163]Jugāntar, July 22, 1907, RNPB (1907), pp. 724-725.

[164]Jugāntar, March 3, 1907, RNPB (1907), p. 171.

[165]Jugāntar, June 16, 1907, as translated in Kali Charan Ghosh, The Roll of Honour: Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs (Calcutta: Vidya Bharati, 1965), p. 138.

[166]Jugāntar, November 2, 1907, as translated in Kali Charan Ghosh, op. cit., p. 96.

[167]Another revolutionary paper adopted the name Sandhyā (eve) suggesting the darkness before the dawn of the new India.

zation out of centuries of torpor. The stagnation and servitude of centuries could only be washed away by blood.[168]

The Jugāntar included a series of articles which discussed the strategy of a revolutionary movement in India. Terrorist political assassinations were regarded as the spark which would ignite a widespread revolutionary conflict with the British. The tactics advocated included the setting up of small factories in remote areas to produce arms and the bribing of European gunmakers to procure guns. The Jugāntar also sanctioned robbery for the purpose of maintaining the revolutionary movement and advised infiltration of the native army.[169] These articles describing tactics of revolution were secretly reprinted in a pamphlet Mukti Kon Pathe (Which Way Does Salvation Lie?). This pamphlet along with the earlier Bhawani Mandir were often found by the British in raids on terrorist headquarters, and were believed to have been the textbooks of the terrorist revolutionary movement.[170]

The Jugāntar writers gave no clear indication of their conception of the form that a future Indian polity should take. They painted a glorious picture of the future

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[168] Jugāntar, June 17, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 555.

[169] Jugāntar, August 12, 1907, as translated in Kali Charan Ghosh, op. cit., pp. 110-111.

[170] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 17. Ker, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

of India without plague and famine, with modern industries and a prospering agriculture. The reference to modern industry shows that their ideal was not a revival of the past nor did they reject all things western.[171] They believed that India could create a progressive polity based on the development of her own cultural tradition.

The terrorist ideology was presented in a religious idiom in the Jugāntar. The goddess of the terrorists was Śaktī, the goddess Kālī. In the Jugāntar, Kālī symbolized the nation, the incarnation of God in the motherland.[172] Kālī in her destructive aspect, black with skulls around her neck, was said to represent the degradation of India under foreign rule, the death and famine due to British exploitation.[173] Kālī in her destructive aspect was also seen as the symbol of violence and revolution, of the death and destruction necessary before rebirth. The worshipper of Kālī was urged to face the reality of evil and fight to overcome evil. The violent deeds of revolutionaries were said to be the divine play of the Mother.[174] The traditional

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[171] Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest (London: Macmillan and Co., 1910), p. 92.

[172] Jugāntar, March 26, 1907, as translated in Kali Charan Ghosh, op. cit., p. 104.

[173] Jugāntar, June 23, 1907, as translated in Kali Charan Ghosh, op. cit., p. 108.

[174] Rowlatt Sedition Report, annexure (1), p. ix.

animal sacrifice of goats and buffalo to Kālī and Durga were also given symbolic significance in terrorist ideology. The revolutionaries were called upon to sacrifice the blood of the oppressors and their own blood before the altar of the mother country to redeem her from shame and degradation.

> Behold the terrible form of the Mother opening her immense mouth, with her tongue protruded and wishing for the blood of the monster. Before plucking out our hearts and offering to the feet of the Mother, let us contemplate the Mother in destructive form to our heart's content. This time the Mother will not accept the sacrifice of sheep. The highest sacrifice (i.e. the sacrifice of human beings) must be offered. Therefore, make haste, you Patriot![175]

For the terrorists Kālī was not only the Mother, symbol of the Indian nation, she was also the patron goddess of revolutionary violence and chaos.

The religious symbolism of the terrorists was primarily *Śakta* but the *Jugāntar* occasionally referred to Kṛṣṇa's participation in the *Mahābhārata* War for the purpose of creating the *dharmarājya* as comparable to the struggle of the nationalists for Indian freedom. This interpretation was drawn from Bankim Chandra's *Kṛṣṇacaritra* and from Tilak's works on the *Gītā*. Aurobindo asked some of his followers to take a vow with a hand on the *Bhagavad Gītā*.[176]

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[175] *Jugāntar*, November 2, 1907, as translated in Kali Charan Ghosh, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

[176] B. B. Majumdar, *Militant Nationalism in India* (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, Ltd., 1966), p. 200.

This usage of the _Gītā_ probably reflected the influence of Tilak's movement in Maharashtra. The Bengalis also inaugurated an annual celebration of the Sivaji festival to express solidarity with the Marathi nationalists.[177] The indigenous Bengali _Vaiṣṇava_ cult was the _Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa_ cult revolving around Kṛṣṇa as lover as pictured in the _Purāṇas_ rather than as warrior and administrator as pictured in the _Mahābhārata_. There was no attempt to use the religious symbols of the _Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa_ cult for political purposes by the Bengali terrorists.

In 1907 Barindra Ghosh became impatient for immediate action. He lost interest in the propaganda work of the _Jugāntar_ newspaper. He allowed some other members of the _Anuśīlan Samiti_ to take over management of the paper, while he tried to train a group of young men for revolutionary action. He assembled a group of about fifteen young men at the Maniktala garden, a piece of family property on the outskirts of Calcutta. Then he went on pilgrimage in search of a _sannyāsin_ to be the religious leader of his revolutionary group. He was also looking for a spot in the Vindhya mountains to build a temple to Kālī and an _āśram_ where the revolutionaries could receive spiritual instruction and training in the use of firearms in accordance with the

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[177]Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, _op_. _cit_., p. 198.

plan sketched in Bhawani Mandir. However, he gave up this plan after he became ill while searching for the spot for the temple, and the old sannyāsin whom he had selected as religious leader died suddenly.[178] Finally, he decided that the Maniktala garden itself would be the āśram for the spiritual revolutionaries. The young men at the Maniktala garden observed a vegetarian diet as befitted sannyāsins, studied religion and politics, and collected firearms.[179] One of the members, Ullaskar Datta, experimented with bomb manufacture. The revolutionary plans of this group were not very extensive or well-organized, and their expectation that the British administration could be overthrown in such a manner seems quite naive. Barindra in his enthusiasm apparently believed that once a revolutionary movement was begun, the spark would quickly spread and result in the quick overthrow of the British. According to one of his comrades:

> We felt that we were the only imperishable truths, and that the Britisher with all his horrid guns and shells was just an illusion. Yes, we could blow down his ugly mighty house of cards with a single whiff of our breath! Our paper sang to this tune, and the echoes made our own hairs stand on their ends. We felt as if the soul of the country was speaking through us.[180]

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[178]Upendranath Banerji, op. cit., pp. 8-13.

[179]Ibid., pp. 15-20.

[180]Ibid., p. 7.

In December, 1907 an abortive attempt was made by Barindra's group to blow up the train in which Lieutenant Governor Andrew Fraser was travelling, but the explosion was poorly timed and merely destroyed a section of the railway track and derailed the train.[181] Later in the same month Barindra went to the Surat Congress where he supported the Extremist party. He tried to contact men from Maharashtra who might be interested in initiating a violent revolutionary struggle but he was disappointed. While in western India he found a religious man named Vishnu Bhaskar Lele who initiated both Aurobindo and Barindra in December, 1907. In February, 1908 Vishnu Bhaskar Lele visited them in Calcutta. He questioned their revolutionary plans and asked whether they could be sure they had the mandate of God for their revolutionary enterprise. Aurobindo and Barindra then cut off ties with Lele, and exonerated him from further responsibility for his disciples.[182] The larger organization of the Anuśīlan Samiti led by Pramatha Mitra also disapproved of the idea of precipitating revolutionary violence so soon. They argued that an extensive underground revolutionary organization should first be organized, but Barindra's

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[181] Ibid., p. 39. See also B. B. Majumdar, op. cit. p. 110.

[182] Upendranath Banerji, op. cit., pp. 34-43. Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother, pp. 41-43.

splinter group went ahead with their revolutionary plans.[183]

The first terrorist murders carried out by the Jugāntar group were aimed at putting an end to the life and career of Magistrate Kingsford, who had become a symbol of British oppression. During the trial of Bipin Pal for contempt of court in the Bande Mataram Sedition case, a fight had broken out between a policeman and a student. Kingsford had sentenced the student to fifteen stripes of the lash which the revolutionaries regarded as a symbol of Indian humiliation and degradation.[184] In April, 1908, two young members of the Maniktala group threw a bomb at Kingsford's carriage believing him to be inside. Instead they killed two English ladies who happened to be riding in the carriage. The next day the police rounded up the young men at Maniktala garden and found explosives and evidence of bomb manufacture. Narendra Gossain, a member of the group, turned informer and was shot by two of the revolutionaries in jail. These two men were subsequently executed. Barindra Ghosh and the rest were deported to imprisonment in the Andaman Islands. Aurobindo was acquitted for lack of evidence that he was involved.[185] According to the Rowlatt

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[183]Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., p. 193.

[184]Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., p. 195. Rowlatt Sedition Report, annexure (1), p. i.

[185]Upendranath Banerji, op. cit., pp. 56-58, 68. Rowlatt Sedition Report, annexure (1).

report on the backgrounds of seven of the convicted they were all from upper caste families, and all had some English education.[186]

After the Maniktala garden incident other secret societies began to turn to terrorism. Pulin Behari Das, founder of the Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti was greatly impressed when he heard Bipin Pal and Pramatha Mitra speak in Dacca in 1905. He traveled to Calcutta to be initiated into the Anuśīlan Samiti, and upon his return to his native district of Dacca he created an extensive revolutionary organization.[187] Like the Calcutta Anuśīlan Samiti, the Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti was ostensibly a society for physical and religious culture. It recruited young men from the national volunteer groups which had been organized to support the svadeśī movement in east Bengal and the national schools established in east Bengal. The government banned several national volunteer organizations in 1908 because they had been infiltrated by the terrorists.[188] In mid-1906, after the police attack on the Barisal Provincial Congress, Pulin Bihari Das decided that his group should go underground.[189] The Dacca Anuśīlan

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[186] Rowlatt Sedition Report, annexure (1), p. ii.

[187] Jogesh Chatterji, op. cit., pp. 14-15. Ker, op. cit., pp. 154-155.

[188] Rowlatt Sedition Report, pp. 14-15.

[189] Jogesh Chatterji, op. cit., p. 9.

Samiti adopted a cadre organization which the British government believed was copied from the example of Russian revolutionaries.[190] The central command in Dacca delegated power to district organizers and then to circle leaders and batch leaders, each of whom commanded a small group of five men. Each batch operated as a discrete unit without knowledge of what the rest of the organization was doing with the idea that if each man knew only the activities of his own group any betrayal would not endanger the whole organization. The activities of each group had to be sanctioned from the center through the chain of command, but only one or two persons at the center knew of the activities of the entire organization.[191]

The Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti was the most powerful of the terrorist groups but there was also a north Bengal group whose territory overlapped and there were independent groups in Barisal and in Calcutta and Howrah.[192] The Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti began its terrorist activities with an attempt on the life of Mr. B. C. Allen, former district magistrate of Dacca, who was wounded but not killed in December, 1907. In the same year the Mymensingh branch of

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[190] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 20.

[191] Jogesh Chatterji, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

[192] Rowlatt Sedition Report, pp. 68-71.

the Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti participated in the Jamalpur riots between Hindus and Muslims. In 1908 at least three armed roberies and the murder of a Bengali informer were attributed to the Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti by British intelligence. In December, 1908 Pulin Das was deported for sedition along with several other Extremist leaders, though no specific charges were made. After his deportation, Makhan Lal Sen became the leader, and carried out a successful train robbery in 1909 in which Rs. 23,000 were secured. In 1910 the Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti extended its efforts to Calcutta and began distributing revolutionary leaflets.[193] Pulin Das returned in February, 1910, but he was rearrested in August and prosecuted along with fifty-four others in the Dacca Conspiracy Case. The Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti headquarters had been raided and arms and literature uncovered which implicated members. Most of the leaders were sentenced to transportation to the Andaman Islands in the ensuing trial and the Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti declined in importance.[194] Although there were attempts to kill Lieutenant Governor Fraser, District Magistrates Allen and Kingsford, and Governor General

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[193]Ibid., pp. 37, 71. Amales Tripathi, The Extremist Challenge, p. 224.

[194]The Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti had been the most extensively organized of the terrorist groups. According to the Rowlatt report: "The existence of this body alone even if there had been no other, would have constituted a public danger." See Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 71. See also Ker, op. cit., pp. 167-168.

Hardings (in 1912) by various terrorist groups in Bengal, none of these attempts on English administrators was successful. Most of those murdered were members of terrorist organizations suspected of informing, or Bengali officials, policemen, and judges.[195] Political murders and robberies occurred every year between 1908 and 1917,[196] but terrorist groups were not able to mount an effective threat to the functioning of the administration.

The membership of the terrorist organizations was almost entirely Hindu and upper caste. The British remarked that the participation of the "bhadralok" castes made the outbreak of murders and robberies in 1908 unique, because the upper castes were hardly ever involved in traditional robber gangs.[197] According to government statistics 165 out of 186 persons convicted of revolutionary crimes between 1907 and 1917 were Brāhmaṇs, Kāyasthas, and Vaidyas. According to the same statistics the majority of the revolutionary criminals were students or professionals, smaller numbers were in government service or were landowners, and only one person was listed as a cultivator.[198] Appar-

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[195] B. B. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 118.

[196] Rowlatt Sedition Report, pp. 28-49.

[197] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[198] Ibid., annexure (2), p. x.

ently the leadership of the terrorist societies was drawn from the English-educated urban elite, but a concerted effort was made to recruit in the rural areas. According to the Rowlatt report there were five hundred branches of the *Anuśīlan Samiti* in the towns and villages of east and north Bengal. The Dacca and Mymensingh rural areas were particularly well organized, and the *Samiti* also had branches in Faridpur, Tippera, Dinajpur, Sylhet and Pabna.[199]

Although the organization of the Bengal terrorist movement was inspired by the example of western revolutionary movements, their cadre organization was legitimized by reference to Hindu institutions. The relationship of the group leader and his followers was compared to the teacher and student relationship in ancient India where the student temporarily left his family and gave his full loyalty to the teacher. The members of the terrorist organizations swore complete loyalty and unquestioning obedience to the group commanders, and it was an intensely personal relationship in most cases.[200] The members regarded themselves as young *sannyāsins* who had renounced family and secular career and material desires to work unselfishly for the religious goal of national freedom.[201] One of the vows of the *Anuśīlan*

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[199] *Ibid.*, p. 71. Ker, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

[200] Jogesh Chatterji, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[201] *Ibid.*

Samiti included renunciation of family ties:

> I will not be bound by the tie of affection for father, mother, brother, sister, hearth and home, etc., and I will, without putting forward any excuse, perform all the work of the circle under order of the leader.[202]

For the members of the Anuśīlan Samiti, Kālī symbolized the nation, and she was also the patron goddess of strength and courage for their mission. The terrorists, like other nationalist groups in Bengal, were very much concerned about the British imputation of cowardice and weakness to the Bengalis.[203] According to one of its followers, the Anuśīlan Samiti produced "iron men" of great moral and physical strength.[204] The members of the Anuśīlan Samiti made offerings to the Goddess Kālī before the start of any mission to give them strength. One of the members described this ritual:

> Before we went to commit a dacoity we used to make offerings to [Goddess] Kali and we carried the offered Prasad and flowers with us, so that the Mother's blessings be with us in our performance of the sacred duty for the fulfilment of the great mission of our life, that is, to free the motherland from ancient bondage. Because of all these rituals and our faith we became fearless and inspired as if possessed by the idea of the great mission to which we dedicated ourselves. And hence, there was a great difference between us and the ordinary run of men.[205]

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[202] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 62.

[203] Valentine Chirol, op. cit., p. 102.

[204] Jogesh Chatterji, op. cit., p. 27.

[205] Ibid.

Neither the passive resistance nor the violent revolutionary tactics of the terrorist samitis were successful in challenging British control though they succeeded in provoking the British government to both repression and reform. The boycott movement petered out after 1907 and the terrorists did not succeed in posing a real threat to the administration. Nevertheless, the British administration clearly saw a need to react to the Extremist boycott and terrorism. John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, tended to take the view that the Moderates should be conciliated by reforms granting greater Indian participation in government in order to separate them from the Extremists. In 1906 he wrote to Lord Minto, who had succeded Curzon as Viceroy, "The only question is whether by doing what we can in the Moderate direction, we can draw the teeth of the Extremists . . . ."[206] Lord Minto agreed that an effort must be made to conciliate Moderate elements in Congress, but he was also in favor of strong measures to repress the Extremists.[207] After the bombing incident in 1908 in which the two Kennedy ladies were killed, Minto became alarmed that a widespread conspiracy existed and he pressed for

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[206]Morley to Minto, October 5, 1906, as quoted in Broomfield, op. cit., p. 35.

[207]Amales Tripathi, op. cit., pp. 176, 179.

stricter press control, deportations, and suppression of all svadeśī societies. But in the following year the government went ahead with the Morley-Minto reforms embodied in the Indian Council Act of 1909 which reconstituted provincial legislative councils with non-official majorities, and gave the provinces of Bengal and eastern Bengal and Assam legislative councils with elective majorities.[208] As an additional conciliatory gesture Bengal was reunited in April, 1912.[209] In spite of the militants' failure to sustain the boycott or pose a real terrorist threat, the British government appears to have been alarmed at the possibility that the educated elite in India might become totally disaffected from British rule. The Morley-Minto reforms were in part an effort to stem the spread of militancy in Bengal, and also in Bombay and the Punjab.

Militant leaders, who utilized a political Vedānta ideology, had different programs of political action but they were united in opposition to the moderates. Bipin Pal was chiefly concerned with extending and consolidating the boycott movement to include boycott of courts and administration as well as the educational and economic boycott. He and Aurobindo Ghosh tried to gain control of the Indian National Congress and its provincial branch in Bengal in

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[208] Broomfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

[209] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

order to obtain an organizational base for a campaign for boycott and passive resistance. Although Aurobindo was publicly known as a passive resistance leader he was also in touch with terrorist groups. When the boycott movement declined in 1907 and the militants failed to gain control of Congress organizational facilities, he apparently encouraged an alternative strategy of robberies and murders to challenge the British administration which was pursued by the Jugāntar group and other terrorist samitis. Although passive resistors like Bipin Pal and the revolutionary groups differed with regard to the question of use of violence, they may be both identified as militants. Their political position differed from the moderates in that they aimed at overthrow of the British administration, they assumed that the Administration would only grant reforms under duress, and they were willing to risk confrontation with the British.

Militants in Bengal politics during the anti-partition agitation were also distinguished from moderates by their tendency to utilize Neo-Hindu concepts and symbols to solicit support for their political position. The political Vedānta of Bipin Pal, Aurobindo, the Jugāntar group, and the Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti contained several common features consistent with the basic trends of Neo-Hindu thought. The justification of their demand for political independence and militant political tactics of confrontation with the

British was based on the Neo-Hindu theory that modernization could be achieved within the framework of indigenous thought and culture. The writings of Aurobindo and the Jugāntar group went still further and claimed that independence was required for the development of India's special spiritual insight which was necessary for the progress of humanity. They were not very precise when it came to actual delineation of the organization of a future polity at once modern and compatible with Hindu thought and culture. Bipin Pal talked of a federal and representative government, and he also tried to discover evidence of democracy in ancient India to show that this form of government was compatible with Hindu culture.[210] Aurobindo wrote that the Vedāntic insight that all are One, and therefore equal, will be the basis of the creation of a new Asiatic democracy, a truer democracy than ever known in the West.[211] The point of this type of argument was to prove that a modern polity could be created in India without the British, and that militant tactics should be adopted to end foreign rule which was impeding the progressive development of the country. The Neo-Hindu interpretation of sannyāsa demonstrated that the spirit of public

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[210]Bipin Pal, "The Message of Indian History" (speech given on August 13, 1904), reprinted in Bipin Pal, Writings and Speeches (Calcutta: Yugayatri, 1958), Vol. I, p. 40.

[211]Bande Mataram, March 16, 1908.

action necessary for a modern state was consistent with Hindu thought. Neo-Hindu versions of the concept of *sannyāsa* and the Kālī symbol were used in the efforts of the militants to recruit for political action. The usage of these Neo-Hindu concepts and symbols was evident in the speeches of Bipin Pal and the writings of Aurobindo, the two most prominent leaders of the Extremists. The same political *Vedānta* idiom was used in the militant vernacular newspapers such as the *Sandhyā* and the *Nabaśaktī*,[212] as well as in the *Jugāntar* newspaper and in the secret societies analyzed above.

Political Vedānta and Political Mobilization

The political *Vedānta* ideology of the militants actually drew upon a multifaceted tradition of Neo-Hindu religious thought. The militant nationalist appeal for *sannyāsin* volunteers dedicated to the service of the nation was based upon the development of a Hindu statement of an activist ethical position, which was the outgrowth of a quarter century of religious ferment, in which the *Brāhmas*, Neo-*Vaiṣṇavas*, as well as the Neo-*Vedānta* movement all played an important part. However, when the militant leaders were appealing for mobilization of political support the religious idiom they used was almost exclusively Neo-*Vedānta* and the

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[212] *Navasakti*, March 6, 1908, RNPB (1908), pp. 482-484. *Sandhya*, May 2, 1907, *RNPB* (1907), p. 395.

symbols were primarily Śakta. The reinterpretation of the meaning of the Gītā and the life of Kṛṣṇa by Bankim Chandra and Aswini Kumar Datta was only a minor strain in the writings of the Bengali Extremists. Even devotees of Chaitanite Vaiṣṇavaism like Bipin Pal made no attempt to integrate symbols of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult into nationalist ideology. Although the Anuśīlan Samiti had been founded by the Neo-Vaiṣṇava leader, Pramath Mitra, this terrorist group and its branches also adopted a political Vedānta idiom. The primary symbol for the Bengali militants was the conception of the nation as Śaktī, and nationalism as devotion to the worship of the goddess.

The Śakta-Vedānta emphasis of the anti-partition leaders can be demonstrated by examining the pattern of participation in the anti-partition agitation in terms of social and religious stratification. Aurobindo and Bipin Pal explicitly recognized the Bengali elite, which they described as the "middle class" or "English educated," as the natural leaders of a movement for independence. Aurobindo was conscious that the elite in isolation was not powerful enough to seriously challenge British control and he proposed to gain the support of other groups. Although his rhetoric occasionally referred to the desirability of awakening the masses, his actual program was directed toward mobilizing the rural upper castes along with the urban elite.

In actual fact the anti-partition agitation was dominated by the upper-caste, urbanized, professional elite with a high degree of student participation. The leaders were also able to mobilize some support from the upper-caste rural landlord group. Lower caste Hindus and Muslims were generally apathetic or hostile to the movement. The Śakta-Vedānta idiom used by the militant leaders corresponded to the dominant religious orientation of rural upper castes and the urban elite.

The svadeśī movement began among the English-educated elite of Calcutta and the district towns of east Bengal. The political organizations controlled by the elite, the Indian Association, and the Bengal Provincial Congress, took a stand against partition.[213] Protest meetings were held in Calcutta and in the district towns of Dacca, Tangail, Manikganj, Narayaganj, Mymensingh, Jessore, and Barisal in east Bengal, and Birbhum and Rampurhat in west Bengal. These meetings were generally called by a well-known lawyer or other member of the town elite, and resolutions for boycott were passed.[214] Protest meetings, which were held frequently in district towns from 1905 to 1907, were presided over by a Chairman and resolutions were carried by voice vote in accordance with English style organizational procedure which the

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[213] Bengalee, January 14, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 23.

[214] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 38.

elite had adopted as their own.[215] A prominent feature of this stage of agitation was the participation of college and even high school students. A student rally attended by all the Calcutta colleges was held in August, 1905 which passed resolutions supporting boycott and opposing the partition.[216] The national volunteer societies who carried on propaganda for svadeśī and harrassed sellers and buyers of foreign cloth and other articles consisted mainly of students.[217] The Bengalee newspaper, commenting on the plan of the students and Young Men's Union of Calcutta to ensure a supply of svadeśī goods to rural areas, remarked, "The success of the swadeshi movement has been due in no small measure to the zeal and devotion of students."[218] The students also organized large processions in Calcutta in support of the nationalist movement.[219] The Government became alarmed and attempted to curb student participation with the Carlyle Circular which penalized students who participated in politics, and threatened to withdraw government funds from schools who did not expel such students. In November, 1905,

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[215] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[216] Sanjivani, August 3, 1905, as quoted in Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, pp. 38-39.

[217] Navayug, November 18, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 1117.

[218] Bengalee, January 27, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 62.

[219] Bengalee, August 8, 1905.

a group of five thousand students massed in Calcutta in College Square to protest the Carlyle Circular. An Anti-Circular society was formed which sent out organizers to radicalize students in the towns of east Bengal.[220] The fifty national schools established by the National Council of Education in the district towns fostered political participation and were recruiting grounds for svadeśī volunteer groups and terrorist societies.[221] The extent of student participation was a source of disagreement between the moderates and the militants. While the militants welcomed student participation, the moderates generally deplored political activism among students.[222]

The leaders of the svadeśī movement were also able to mobilize support among rural landlords, though powerful zamindārs became alarmed when the movement turned violent. In October, 1905 the Bengal Landholders Association presented a memorial to the Government against the plan to transfer east Bengal districts to Assam.[223] The Dacca Gazette noted that: "It is a significant fact and one which Government

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[220] Daily Hitavadi, November 6, 1905, RNPB (1905), pp. 1056-1057.

[221] Rowlatt Sedition Report, p. 71. See also quote from the "Administrative Report of the Government of East Bengal and Assam," in Sanjivani, April 23, 1909, RNPB (1909), p. 492.

[222] Navayug, November 3, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 1117.

[223] Amrita Bazar Patrika, October 13, 1904, RNEPB (1904), p. 483.

should take note of, that the zamindars of Eastern Bengal, who, as a rule, are less moved by abstract political ideas than the middle class gentry, have made common cause with the latter in the present movement."[224] This comment makes it clear that the writer was aware of a distinction between the urban elite and the landlord group, and noted that the latter had been previously less politically conscious.

The rise of political consciousness among landholding groups in Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth century may be related to economic as well as political factors. The continuous subinfeudation of landholdings combined with lack of rise in production per acre had put a squeeze on land profits dating back to about 1870. British government reports noted particular economic distress among the landlord population in certain districts of high upper-caste concentration in east Bengal, like Vikrampur (Dacca) and Backergunge which were also important centers of the svadeśī movement.[225] Economic conditions were related to the prospect of partition because many zamindārs feared that the separation of the eastern districts from Bengal province would be a pretext for the British Administration to nullify the Permanent

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[224] Dacca Gazette, January 18, 1904, RNPB (1904), p. 108 (original article in English).

[225] Amales Tripathi, op. cit., p. 144. See also J. C. Jack, The Economic Life of a Bengal District (London: 1916), pp. 50-53.

Settlement and demand more land revenue. The zamindārs were apprehensive that the new government of East Bengal and Assam would be short of revenue and they would be taxed more heavily.[226] Undoubtedly, the zamindārs of east Bengal also feared that the creation of a Muslim majority province consisting of East Bengal and Assam might threaten their social and economic dominance, since the landlord population was largely upper caste Hindu and the cultivators were Muslim. After partition, the Landlord Association expressed support for svadeśī and voted to subscribe 20,000 rupees for the purchase and setting up of weaving machines.[227] It was also reported that an unusual number of zamindārs appeared at the Bengal Provincial Congress in 1905. According to a militant vernacular newspaper:

> Zamindars participated with great zeal in the proceedings of the recent Provincial Conference at Mymensingh. It is no doubt a matter for congratulation that zamindars are beginning to pluck up courage.[228]

The militant press and politicians made frequent appeals for landlord support. Bipin Pal's New India appealed to Bengali landholders to give financial aid to svadeśī storekeepers faced with a large financial loss,[229]

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[226] Dacca Gazette, January 18, 1904, RNPB (1904), p. 109.

[227] Sanjivani, August 24, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 850.

[228] Sandhya, April 25, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 432.

[229] New India, August 26, 1906.

and Bipin Pal made frequent trips through the rural districts of east Bengal to collect funds and arouse support. He organized a social boycott against those zamindārs who would not support the economic boycott against British goods.[230] According to one newspaper there were three classes of leaders in the country: "(1) public speakers, (2) editors of newspapers, and (3) zamindars," and the zamindārs have the most opportunity to reach larger segments of the population who do not read or listen to speeches.[231] Apparently, the militant leaders had some hope of a vertical organization of the masses through the zamindārs, but the rise of Muslim resistance to svadeśī dashed these hopes, and the press then changed their line and bid for zamindār support on the basis that the partition encouraged the development of Muslim power which would damage their interests. The press frequently accused the Government of East Bengal of encouraging Muslim cultivators to rebel against their landlords and alluded to the intransigence of Muslims who had come to regard themselves as a privileged class.[232] After the Hindu-Muslim riots in Jamalpur, Mymensingh, one newspaper noted that although the "middle class" could protect themselves through

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[230]Amales Tripathi, op. cit., p. 159.

[231]Ananda Bazar Patrika, July 11, 1907.

[232]Bengalee, August 3, 1907, RNEPB (1907), p. 344. Amrita Bazar Patrika, June 30, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 48.

a system of volunteer organizations the Hindu landlords were vulnerable to Muslim attack. According to the paper, "Hindu zamindars especially are strongly advised to combine and form a Defense Association for self-protection."[233]

Efforts to mobilize landlord support for the svadeśī movement were closely connected with a religious appeal. The most frequent form of religious appeal were collective vows taken at Kālī temples in towns and rural areas to abstain from foreign goods.[234] The popular annual Durga pūjā was used to propagate the identification of the Mother Goddess with the motherland of Bengal. During a Durga pūjā celebration in Calcutta, Manchester was equated with the evil buffalo demon killed by the goddess, and English cloth was sacrificed to her image.[235] Furthermore, Brāhmaṇ priests in various rural areas of Bengal were induced to threaten to excommunicate those Hindus who bought foreign goods; this campaign was particularly directed against upper caste Hindus in the rural areas whose religious rituals required Brāhmaṇ priests. For example, a Calcutta newspaper reported:

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[233]Amrita Bazar Patrika, April 30, 1907, RNEPB (1907) p. 48.

[234]Sanjivani, October 5, 1905, as cited in Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 235.

[235]Sandhya, October 20, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 1019.

> . . . the Bhattacharya family of village Maheshpur, zilla Jessore, the spiritual head of the local Brahmin and Vaidya families is visiting homes asking people to take oaths in temples not to buy foreign goods.[236]

Brāhmaṇ priests in Nadia, Vikrampur (Dacca) and Barisal were reported to have given their opinion that the use of foreign cloth, sugar, and salt in religious ceremonials was contrary to the Śāstras.[237]

The campaign of the militants to gain support among rural upper castes was fairly successful for a time. According to the Muslim press, landlords in east Bengal pressured their Muslim tenants to buy higher priced svadeśī goods which caused considerable hardship and resentment among the tenants.[238] In 1906 a Muhammadan Vigilance Association was formed which collected evidence of Hindu landlords pressuring their tenants to support the boycott.[239] It was reported that one of the causes of the Hindu-Muslim riot in Comilla was the pressure of Hindu landlords on the small number of Muslim landlords in the area to support the boycott.[240] Small landholders were also reported to have been prominent in the secret samitis organized in such districts

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[236] Hitavarta, December 24, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 12.

[237] Sanjivani, August 10, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 799.

[238] Mihir o Sudhakar, June 14, 1907, RNPB (1907), pp. 566-568.

[239] Indian Empire, December 5, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 520.

[240] Amales Tripathi, op. cit., p. 159.

of east Bengal as Backergunge, Faridpur, and Dacca. The Dacca Anuśīlan Samiti had a strong base among the impoverished rural upper castes in Vikrampur and other areas. It was extensively organized with over five hundred branches in towns and villages and its membership was almost entirely upper caste Hindu drawn from both the urban elite and rural areas.[241] While many rural upper-caste Hindus were active supporters of the boycott and secret societies, others became alarmed once the terrorist movement began. Zamindārs became anxious to retreat from the svadeśī movement which was awakening Muslim political consciousness and threatening to create widespread unrest detrimental to their interest in maintaining the status quo. The British Indian Association, a conservative landlord group, blamed the boycott for the outburst of terrorism, and withdrew its support from the movement in the latter half of 1908. One militant newspaper lamented: "The swadeshi and boycott movements could not have made such headway if the zamindar had not lent his helping hand" but "the zamindars are now singing a different tune."[242]

The militant nationalists were not able to gain much support from merchants and shopkeepers. The boycott was particularly aimed at British textiles which had practically

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[241] Rowlatt Sedition Report, pp. 15, 71. Jogesh Chatterji, op. cit., p. 25.

[242] Sandhya, August 5, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 1485.

taken over the market in Bengal. The Marwari community who were the main dealers in English cloth adopted an ambivalent attitude. They sometimes expressed support for the idea of _svadeśī_ and interest in investing in Indian cotton mills, but since their main business was marketing English cloth the _svadeśī_ movement was counter to their immediate economic interests. In September, 1905, the Marwari Chamber of Commerce requested the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to use their influence to reverse the partition of Bengal.[243] When this failed they attempted to persuade the English suppliers to let them renogiate their contract to buy textiles since they feared it would be difficult to dispose of them. They also appealed unsuccessfully to the _svadeśī_ leaders to allow them to get rid of the stock of foreign cloth on hand if they would attempt to support indigenous industry thereafter.[244] By 1906 Marwari shopkeepers in Calcutta became hostile to _svadeśī_ volunteers whose activities were hurting their business, and in September there was a clash between Marwari shopkeepers and _svadeśī_ supporters in north Calcutta.[245] The textile mill owners in Bombay expressed their support for the _svadeśī_ movement,[246] but in Bengal

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[243] _Dacca Gazette_, September 18, 1905, _RNPB_ (1906), p. 930.

[244] _Hitavadi_, September 24, 1905, _RNPB_ (1905), p. 963.

[245] _Hitavarta_, September 9, 1906, _RNPB_ (1906), p. 832.

[246] _Bengalee_, September 6, 1905.

there was no large scale native industry which could rapidly take advantage of the boycott of British cloth. The hand weaving industry of Bengal had practically disappeared and it was very difficult to organize the demoralized weaving castes to take advantage of the new opportunity.[247] The boycott movement did not receive much support from small Bengali shopkeepers and traders. There are no references to any special effort to mobilize support among these groups except the negative tactic of organizing social boycott.[248] The Bengali Bāniā castes who were important as small traders and shopkeepers in Calcutta and smaller towns were strong and exclusive Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Vaiṣṇava devotees.[249] These middle castes would have been an important element of support for a successful boycott although their economic power over the cloth trade was subordinate to that of the Marwaris.

The Bengali elite leading the movement was a group with little capital or business experience and their efforts to start cotton mills were failures. Svadeśī stores were often run by idealistic college students with no business acumen. In effect, people were being asked to avoid cheaper British textiles for higher priced indigenous products,

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[247] Bengalee, October 14, 1905, RNEPB (1905), p. 373.

[248] Daily Hitavadi, January 9, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 29.

[249] Jogendranath Bhattacharya, Hindu Castes and Sects (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1896), pp. 198-199.

especially since those marketing British goods lowered their prices to meet the svadeśī threat.[250] As a whole, small merchants and traders found that the svadeśī movement hurt their trade.[251] The actual import of English textiles dropped 13 percent in 1906-1907, but returned to normal in the following year.[252] By mid-1907 the press frequently referred to lack of svadeśī enthusiasm.[253] Thus, the svadeśī movement had only a temporary effect on the sale of British textiles, in Bengal,[254] and it did not receive much support from cloth merchants.

The political mobilization of the urban and rural upper castes in support of svadeśī volunteer organizations

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[250] Jasohar, July 4, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 1338.

[251] Hitavarta, October 1, 1905, RNPB (1905), pp. 982-983.

[252] Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 151.

[253] Swades, March 4, 1907, RNPB (1907), p. 193. Sandhya, September 23, 1907, RNPB (1907), p. 1010.

[254] The nationalist school of historians of the anti-partition agitation gloss over the evidence that the economic effect of the boycott was limited and temporary. Haridas and Uma Mukherjee stress reports in the Statesman of individual traders reporting lack of business but ignore the overall yearly figures for English cloth imports which show only a slight setback in 1906-1907 (see Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, pp. 65-66). R. C. Majumdar relies on the same source for his discussion of the effectiveness of the boycott in History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. II (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963), pp. 54-55. Neither of these works mentions any evidence that the boycott was effective after 1907.

and terrorist societies resulted in the beginnings of counter mobilization among other groups in Bengali society. The Muslim population in Bengal consisted of a small group of landlords and professionals and a large majority of landless cultivators. The small Muslim elite had shown signs of resentment in the late nineteenth century over the domination of civil service and professional jobs by Hindus. They believed that they were discriminated against because Hindus were entrenched as heads of offices.[255] Among Muslim cultivators there was always latent resentment against the landlord class who were for the most part upper-caste Hindus. This class antagonism was accentuated by frequent disputes over religious issues such as the right of Muslim tenants to slaughter cows.[256] In the early years of the twentieth century the Muslim press expressed concern over the Hindu religious tone of militant nationalists, the identification of the nation with Hindu symbols, and the cult of Hindu heroes.[257]

When the proposal to enact a Universities Bill that

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[255] Mihir o Sudhakar, June 22, 1900, RNPB (1900), p. 494.

[256] Mihir o Sudhakar, June 14, 1907, RNPB (1907), pp. 566-568. Indian Mirror, May 17, 1901, RNEPB (1901), p. 336.

[257] Mihir o Sudhakar, July 31, 1903, RNPB (1903), p. 698. Soltan, February 10, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 157.

would raise college fees was revealed in 1902, the Muslim press opposed the Bill on the basis that it would hurt poor Muslim students seeking advancement through English education. They expressed solidarity with English-educated Hindus on this issue.[258] When partition was announced the Mihir o Sudhakar initially supported the protest of the Hindu elite and accepted the argument that Bengal was one nation and should not be divided.[259] But a month later the same paper pointed out that the new province might be to the advantage of Muslims, and in any case Muslims should not get involved in the potentially seditious anti-partition agitation.[260] The Mihir o Sudhakar also declined to support the boycott movement, but expressed its support for the development of indigenous industries which would be of benefit to Hindus and Muslims alike.[261] Some prominent English-educated Muslims came forward to support the svadeśī movement, but as the Muslim press was quick to point out, their numbers were small, and they had neither large scale support from their

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[258] Mihir o Sudhakar, August 15, 1902, RNPB (1902), p. 512. Mihir o Sudhakar, August 28, 1902, RNPB (1902), p. 545.

[259] Mihir o Sudhakar, July 14, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 697. Moslem Chronicle, August 5, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 294.

[260] Mihir o Sudhakar, August 11, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 801.

[261] Mihir o Sudhakar, September 8, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 900.

own religious community nor any leverage in the predominantly Hindu svadeśī meetings, committees, and organizations.[262] Meanwhile, other members of the English-educated Muslim group began to organize a movement in favor of partition beginning with a march of Muslim students and teachers in Calcutta.[263] As time went on the Muslim press began to stress the benefits of partition for Muslims and the disadvantages of the svadeśī movement. The Muslim press expressed satisfaction over the increase in the proportion of Muslims on the district boards and in the public service of East Bengal and Assam.[264] It was also stressed that poor Muslim cultivators could not afford higher priced svadeśī cloth and sugar.[265] In 1906 the Mohammedan Vigilance Association was formed, and in the same year the Muslim League was established to support partition and press for special consideration for the Muslim community.[266] It was also reported that

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[262] Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906, p. 145. Mihir o Sudhakar, August 11, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 801.

[263] Amrita Bazar Patrika, September 5, 1905, RNEPB (1905), p. 321.

[264] Mihir o Sudhakar, May 31, 1907, RNPB (1907), p. 512.

[265] Mihir o Sudhakar, January 19, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 82.

[266] Indian Empire, December 5, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 520.

Muslim preachers were touring the east Bengal countryside inciting the cultivators against Hindu landlords.[267] In December a pamphlet was widely circulated which urged svajāti instead of svadeśī, meaning the development of Muslim economic power.[268] In 1907 in reaction to the Hindu religious idiom of the militant leaders, the Mihir o Sudhakar expressed the opinion that the "Bande Mataram party" led by Bipin Pal "indirectly assert that in India the Hindus alone have any lawful rights, they will not rest content with expelling the English but will soon make the conditions of the Musalmans in India similar to that of their co-religionists in Spain."[269] In 1907 there were major clashes between Hindus and Muslims at Vikrampur (Dacca), Comilla (Tippera), and Jamalpur (Mymensingh).[270] The Hindu press blamed the violence on British divide and rule tactics, while the Muslim press attributed the violence to Hindu oppression.[271] Subsequently, the Muslim elite began to organize meetings of

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[267] Charu Mihir (Mymensingh), June 12, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 539.

[268] Sanjivani, December 20, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 1154.

[269] Mihir o Sudhakar, March 15, 1907, RNPB (1907), p. 248.

[270] Soltan, April 19, 1907, RNPB (1907), pp. 336-337. Daily Hitavadi, April 30, 1907, RNPB (1907), p. 365. Mihir o Sudhakar, May 3, 1907, RNPB (1907), p. 389.

[271] Bande Mataram, March 12, 1907, RNEPB (1907), p. 78.

their community to boycott products ordinarily produced and marketed by Hindus, particularly sweetmeats.[272]

The svadeśī movement also failed to mobilize the lower caste Hindu cultivating population. The upper castes generally encountered apathy or hostility among the lower castes. When lower caste representatives at svadeśī meetings consented to support the boycott they generally used the issue to gain upper caste promises that social discrimination would be lessened. In Jessore at a svadeśī meeting "resolutions were passed condemning the indifference of the upper classes of the Hindus to the welfare of the Namasūdras. The Namasūdras on their part promised to abstain from the use of all sorts of bilati [foreign] articles."[273] However, as a whole, the Namaśūdras, the most numerous Hindu cultivating group in east Bengal appear to have been hostile to the anti-partition agitation. They were predominantly Vaiṣṇava and had showed signs of resenting their low position in the Hindu hierarchy. In 1901 a Namaśūdra association had submitted a memorial to the Government claiming Śūdra status and asking to be referred to as Namaśūdras instead of

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[272] Mihir o Sudhakar, May 29, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 1065. Mihir o Sudhakar, June 26, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 1247.

[273] Jasohar, April 9, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 750. For a similar demand by another low caste, see Sanjivani, April 9, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 751.

Chandals.[274] They also expressed resentment over being given the "untouchable" job of cleaning privies in the jails.[275] In 1907 the Namaśūdra Association became quite active, and Muslims began to urge them to leave their low position in Hindu society and convert to Islam.[276] In Khulna in 1908 Namaśūdras joined Muslims in disturbances against Hindus which had to be quelled by the police.[277] Thus, there were signs that the anti-partition agitation was leading to counter mobilization among the lower caste population.

Svadeśī supporters were somewhat more successful in making contact with industrial labor around Calcutta. Some workers in jute mills outside Calcutta were won over to the svadeśī cause. On October 19, 1905, the day on which the boycott movement was inaugurated, the workers wore rakhī bands signifying the brotherhood of all Bengalis, and shouted the slogan "Bande Mātaram." A scuffle ensued between the workers and European foremen which was the immediate cause for calling a strike, though the unhealthy conditions of work and low pay were the central issues.[278] The militant

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[274] Tripura Hitaishi, February 19, 1901, RNPB (1901), p. 153.

[275] Kasipur Nivasi, April 5, 1905, RNPB (1905), p. 362.

[276] Mihir o Sudhakar, June 5, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 1114.

[277] Khulnavasi, June 20, 1908, RNPB (1908), p. 1209.

[278] Bengalee, January 10, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 16.

vernacular press also supported a strike by telegraph operators and East India Railway employees asking for higher wages and more equal treatment in comparison with European employees.[279] One paper even supported the demand of sweepers for the Calcutta Municipality for higher pay.[280] Militant leaders lectured to workers,[281] and were able to gain some support, but the number of industrial laborers in Bengal in 1905 was small. In contrast to the efforts of militant leaders to link labor unrest to the nationalist cause they did not call for a no-rent campaign which would have appealed to landless cultivators.

The exclusive use of Śakta-Vedānta religious idiom in the appeals of militant politicians for support for svadeśī and svarāj was apparently due to their preoccupation with gaining the support of particular groups in Bengali society, the rural upper castes and the urban elite. Their political Vedānta was specifically aimed at the upper caste constituency, who were in turn the only segments of Bengali society who responded to the call for active opposition to British rule. The leaders lack of concern with religious symbols that might have appealed to Muslims and Vaiṣṇava

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[279] Bande Mataram, March 4, 1908, RNEPB (1908), p. 79. Amrita Bazar Patrika, August 2, 1906, RNEPB (1906), p. 349.

[280] Sandhya, August 21, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 770.

[281] Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 146.

cultivating castes was duplicated in their lack of concern with secular issues such as land and tax reform that might have appealed to these groups. The political Vedānta leaders seem to have formulated the strategy of mobilizing support among the rural upper castes in the belief that rural landlords would prevail upon their tenants to follow their natural leaders. The political Vedāntists realized that if the English-educated, professional, urban elite were to pressure the British administration effectively they needed a wider base of political support. The rural landlords who shared common upper-caste customs and religious outlook were a natural choice in their search for allies. They attempted to achieve a horizontal mobilization of upper castes in town and country to be followed by vertical mobilization of the cultivators by landlords in the hope of maintaining their elite status and at the same time mobilizing political support for the overthrow of the British. However, the close correspondence of religious stratification and social stratification in Bengali society made the use of a religious idiom very risky. The religious divisions of Bengali society closely corresponded to social antagonisms in the rural areas. The political Vedānta idiom combined with lack of attention to secular issues appealing to the rural masses led to counter mobilization among Muslims and some lower caste cultivating groups. The Bengali elite also made little effort to appeal to Bāniā castes, small shopkeepers, and traders who

were strongly Vaiṣṇava in religious orientation, who might have been important allies in organizing the boycott in urban areas.

From the vantage point of hindsight it seems quite foolish for the Bengali elite to have attempted to use a religious idiom which had such limited appeal in Bengali society to challenge British rule. But it should be pointed out that the Bengali elite had no experience with mass politics. In the late nineteenth century political action had been almost entirely restricted to interaction between British administration and the Bengali elite. In the decade between 1852 and 1862 there had been some evidence of unrest among the rural masses due to the exploitation by European indigo planters, but the Bengali elite was sympathetic to the plight of the cultivators in this instance, and with the decline of a market for indigo the agitation disappeared.[282] In 1873 there was a short-lived agrarian disturbance in Pabna when zamindārs tried to levy new and excessive taxes, but this instance of peasant unrest was isolated and there was little sign of unrest in the late nineteenth century to make the Bengali elite aware of the cultivators as a potential political force. Moreover, the small Muslim English-educated group had not shown any sign that they were inter-

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[282]See Blair Kling, The Blue Mutiny: Indigo Disturbances in Bengal, 1859-1862 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966).

ested in or capable of mobilizing support from the backward Muslim peasantry. Prior to 1905 English-educated Muslims had not gained any influence in the educational or political institutions of Bengal and they must have seemed too small and powerless a group to pose any challenge to the political dominance of the Bengali elite. During the anti-partition agitation the militant press of the Bengali elite expressed indignation when British officials began to make a point of expressing sympathy for Muslim aspirations and educated Muslims began to accuse upper-caste Hindus of oppressing Hindu cultivators.[283] Apparently, they had not considered the possibilities of counter mobilization. When anti-Hindu riots against svadeśī volunteers and zamindārs broke out in east Bengal the militant press protested with surprise that relations between Hindus and Muslims had always been peaceful and friendly before.[284] Aurobindo, the major theoretician of the militants, reacted by asking Hindus to cultivate brotherhood with Muslims, but he did not attempt to analyze the problem of conflict of economic interests between cultivator and landlord, or the effect of his political Vedānta on non-upper-caste Hindu groups in Bengali society. The Bengal elite seem to have assumed that their position of leadership, and the dominance of the upper castes in rural

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[283] Charu Mihir, February 27, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 195.

[284] Jasohar, June 20, 1906, RNPB (1906), p. 565.

areas, would naturally continue unchallenged, and they were not prepared to deal with mobilization among other groups.

The development of political Vedānta ideology served the needs of the Bengali elite only up to a certain point. It provided an ideological rationale for their own opposition to British rule and their claim to progressive leadership. At the same time political Vedānta seemed to offer the English-educated elite an idiom suitable to wider political mobilization in that it presented a nationalist theory that was not obviously derived from the West. The reinterpretation of Hindu, and specifically Śakta-Vedānta ideas and institutions, to serve the cause of nationalism and political activism in opposition to British rule was appealing to the broader rural upper-caste group which had little exposure to western ideas. Political Vedānta ideology served to re-integrate the Bengali elite with the larger upper-caste constituency in Bengali society and to develop a higher degree of political activism in this broader group that had been previously seen. But while political Vedānta served to reunite rural and urban upper castes, it was a divisive factor in the development of political awareness in Bengali society as a whole. The use of political Vedānta idiom made it more difficult for the elite to communicate with other groups in Bengali society, and contributed to counter mobilization among low-caste Hindus and Muslims which was a rejection of elite leadership. The opposition to British

rule was fragmented and the development of a unified nationalist movement was seriously impeded.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion: Neo-Hinduism and Militant Politics in Bengal

Our study of Neo-Hinduism and political militancy in Bengal sought to prove a two part hypothesis concerning Neo-Hindu religious ideology and the political development of the Bengali elite. According to the first part of our hypothesis as stated in the Introduction:

> Neo-Hindu religious doctrines, formulated by members of the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century, integrated new ethical concepts of individual ethical judgment, social activism and human progress into their Hindu heritage. This reinterpretation of Hinduism developed an ideology of modernization consonant with indigenous thought which provided the elite with a reasoned justification to view themselves as an indigenous group capable of political leadership without British guidance.

Our findings in support of this hypothesis challenge the conclusions of social historian Pradip Sinha, who analyzed in detail the ideological development of the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century. According to Sinha's study, Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History,[1] the emergence of the Neo-Hindu ideologies of Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda was the expression of a compromise with Hindu religious orthodoxy of the upper castes in rural areas. Sinha regards the Bengali elite as compris-

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[1]Pradip Sinha, Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965).

ing the upper castes as a whole, including the rural landlords and the small urban professional group. Broomfield's use of the Bengali term "bhadralok" to denote a status group roughly corresponding to the upper castes in Bengali society, implies a similar view of an undifferentiated upper caste elite.[2] According to Sinha, within this broad and undifferentiated upper caste group the "gentry" or landed element were predominant. He argues that the character of ideological and social development in late nineteenth century Bengal was determined by the commercial setback experienced by the upper castes of Bengali society in the earlier part of the century which drove them back to dependence on land rent. Although he grants the development of a professional urban group in the late nineteenth century, he maintains that this group retained close ties with the numerous rural upper castes dependent on land rent. Sinha further states that the urban professionals desired social stability and harmony within the upper castes which required compromise with orthodox Hindu religious views then holding sway in rural areas. Although small numbers among the urban professionals espoused western ideas and challenged Hindu orthodoxy, the dominant trend as seen by Sinha was toward a compromise which admitted the assimilation of a few western

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[2]See detailed discussion of Broomfield's theory in the Introduction and Chapter Two.

ideas but kept the basic Hindu tradition intact. While he notes that one of the few attempts to challenge Hindu orthodoxy was made by the small sect of Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, Sinha argues that the Neo-Hindu movements of Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda represented the major trend among the upper castes: compromise with Hindu religious orthodoxy of the rural areas.

On the contrary the findings of our study demonstrate that an urban English-educated professional elite had emerged in late nineteenth century Bengal. This elite had developed a separate identity. Their perception that their interests differed from those of the rural landed upper caste group was reflected in the foundation of the Indian Association by urban professionals who resented the domination of landlords in the British Indian Association. The members of Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava movements were drawn from the same urban elite as the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas. Since all these religious reformers were drawn from the same social stratum it is difficult to see why, as Pradip Sinha suggests, Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava movements should have had a greater tendency toward compromise with the orthodox Hindu outlook of the rural areas. He ignores the fact that doctrines of social activism and human progress which were not stressed in the established faiths of Bengal, were heavily emphasized in Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava as well as in Brāhma religious ideology. The only basic difference was that Neo-

Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava groups insisted that Hindu thought properly understood already embraced these doctrines, while the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas believed they could only be derived from contact with the West; but this difference does not prove that Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava thought was an attempt to compromise with Hindu orthodoxy.

The most important gap in Sinha's analysis is his failure to take into account the political context of the articulation of Neo-Hindu doctrines which our findings point to as the crucial issue. Sinha's presentation of Neo-Hinduism as a compromise ideology born out of a desire for harmony between urban and rural elements of upper caste society, does not take into account the political grievances of the urban elite in the late nineteenth century and the question of their relationship to the ruling power. The frustration of elite aspirations for political power under British rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was unlikely to produce an elite whose major concern was stability. Neo-Hindu ideology functioned to challenge the status quo in that it provided the Bengali elite with a rationale for claiming political leadership in opposition to British rule.

According to our data, both the Brāhma and non-Brāhma religious reformers of the late nineteenth century were members of the Bengali elite, a western-educated, professional and urban group who were drawn from the upper

castes of Bengali society. The leadership of the *Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj* was almost entirely upper caste in composition. The officers and members of the executive committees in Calcutta and Dacca were English-educated, and a large number of them had higher degrees and prestigious professional jobs. The Neo-*Vaiṣṇava* religious reform movement was led by Bankim Chandra Chatterji and a group of disciples of Bijoy Krishna Goswami. All of these men were members of the three upper castes, English-educated, and engaged in government service or the professions of teaching, journalism, medicine, and law. Swami Vivekananda and his *gurubhāis* and disciples in the Ramakrishna Mission organization came from similar backgrounds; they were upper caste and had an English education. Since most of the members of the Ramakrishna Mission had renounced secular careers to become *sannyāsins* at an early age, very few had actually pursued a professional career. However, they were almost all from urban areas, and from families with aspirations for a professional career for their sons. The religious reformers were members of an urban elite with only tenuous ties with the upper-caste, rural, landed group in the Bengali countryside. Thus, reinterpretation of Hindu religious doctrines was the concern of a western-educated elite, the group in Bengali society with the most exposure to western ideas and the greatest political awareness.

There were common features in all the religious

ideologies formulated by members of the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century which differed from established Vaiṣṇava and Śakta-Vedānta doctrines. Sādhāraṇ and Ādi Brāhmas, Neo-Vaiṣṇavas and Neo-Vedāntists all incorporated into their religious ideology ideas of human progress, social activism and individual ethical judgment--concepts which they believed necessary to create a modern society and polity. The religious ideology of the reformers was therefore fundamentally concerned with ethics or the relation of man to society. Metaphysics interested the religious reformers as a background for ethical doctrine; they were concerned with the Christian missionary contention that the Hindu metaphysical outlook was linked to the lack of political and economic progress in India.

Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas did accept the missionary criticism that traditional Hinduism was an obstacle to progress in India. According to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, Śaṁkara's advaita Vedānta with its belief that all reality is one and the appearance of multiplicity is illusory was responsible for the stagnation of Indian society. The denial of the reality of the world and the soul was said to have undermined positive moral commitment to action within society and to have encouraged religious men to withdraw from society. Consequently, the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas adopted a dualism similar to liberal Christian faith, or qualified non-dualism which upheld the reality of the world and the soul. They chal-

lenged the cyclical cosmology of Hinduism and substituted a belief in progressive evolution of the universe and human society. They also rejected the Hindu institution of sannyāsa as the ideal religious life, believing that withdrawal from society by the sannyāsin was an evasion of moral responsibility to serve one's fellow men within society. Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas attacked the particularistic Hindu code of ethics, which they believed bound Hindus to family and caste obligations and prevented dedication to the improvement of the community. They challenged the basis of Hindu ethics in the scriptures and upheld the concept of individual ethical judgment based on universal principles which could be applied by the individual in specific instances. The ethics of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj provided a justification for social activism and for their challenge of traditional social customs.

The Neo-Vaiṣṇava religious ideology was very similar to the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma doctrine except that the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas searched for Vaiṣṇava precedents to support an activist ethic. Bankim Chandra, Bipin Pal, and Aswini Kumar Datta all rejected Śaṁkara's advaita Vedānta and supported dualism or qualified non-dualism for which they found a basis in traditional Vaiṣṇava thought. They accepted the idea that Śaṁkara's denial of the reality of the world had undermined positive social ethics, but they claimed that the Vaiṣṇava heritage, on the contrary, upheld the reality of the world

and was thus conducive to an activist ethic. In general they rejected the Hindu institution of sannyāsa as a withdrawal from moral responsibility. Bankim Chandra and Aswini Kumar drew upon the life of Kṛṣṇa as portrayed in the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā as an example of a man who worked for the creation of a better society. Bankim Chandra interpreted the Hindu concept of dharmarājya (righteous kingdom) as a future goal of human progress rather than as an idealization of the past. The Neo-Vaiṣṇavas also believed that ethics should not be limited to the particularist code of social norms of traditional Hinduism, but should be based on the universal principle of bhakti, love of God and man, which could be applied according to individual judgment.

Religious reformers who tried to reinterpret the Śakta-Vedānta cult, which was the religious tradition of the majority of the elite, faced the most difficult problems. Vedānta had been subjected to sharp attack by the missionaries and the Brāhmas as a religious ideology which undermined positive ethical involvement in society. Vivekananda met this criticism with a new interpretation of the non-dualist concept of reality for the life of men. According to Vivekananda the belief that everything is God means that every human soul is divine, and God can be worshipped as the sum total of human souls, humanity. The true religious life for man is active service within society to worship God in humanity. Vivekananda argues that the advaita

Vedānta concept of all humanity and the whole universe as ultimately One Reality leads to a positive activist ethic, and is truly the only rational basis for active service for the good of humanity. He believed that active work within society to do good for others was necessary to rid the soul of egoism. Service to others in Vivekananda's doctrine would lead the self to realize its unity with the non-self. He did not hold out the hope of a future righteous kingdom as did other Neo-Hindus. One of his most important contributions was his reinterpretation of the Hindu religious institution of sannyāsa which had been repudiated by the Brāhmas. To Vivekananda, sannyāsa meant renunciation but not withdrawal; sannyāsa meant the renunciation of material desires and worldly ties for dedication to selfless service to man. Bankim Chandra had also suggested an activist interpretation of the sannyāsa tradition in Ānandamaṭh, but Vivekananda actually created an activist sannyāsin organization, the Ramakrishna Mission.

The religious reformers' advocacy of social activism and individual ethical judgment was an effort to redirect the ethical commitment of Hindus from a particularistic code of duties, centered around family and caste obligations, to a broader concept of work for the public good. The reformist religious ideologies presented the religious life for all as service to one's fellow man through active work for the improvement of society. Most of the religious reformers

tried to direct social activism toward the concept of a national community though they also stressed the general good of humanity. Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda, and Nivedita played the most important role in interpreting the Goddess Kālī of the Śakta-Vedānta faith as symbolic of a national community toward which the new social activism should be directed. They interpreted the Hindu institution of sannyāsa as renunciation of family ties for active service to the national community, at times conceived as Bengal, at other times as the whole of India.

Although the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas, the Neo-Vaiṣṇavas, and the Neo-Vedāntists all formulated a religious ideology of social activism, their conception of the direction in which an activist ethic would move their society was different. On the whole the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas adopted the goal of modernization through westernization. They imitated the religious doctrines of the Unitarians. Their social program was essentially modernization through anglicization, and they believed that only westernization of Indian society would result in political and economic development. Although a few Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas tried to show that their religious doctrines were compatible with the Upaniṣads, the main line of Sādhāraṇ Brāhma thought was not devoted to demonstrating that a social activist ethic was compatible with Hindu tradition; thus it cannot be classified as a truly Neo-Hindu doctrine.

On the other hand the main effort of Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇavism was to demonstrate that an ethic of social activism and human progress was compatible with Hindu thought. Neo-Vaiṣṇavas tried to show that true Vaiṣṇavism was conducive to the improvement of society, and the Neo-Vedānta movement linked the Śakta-Vedānta faith to social service for the national community. Since Swami Vivekananda and many of the Neo-Vaiṣṇava leaders had been associated with the Brāhma Samāj, their emphasis on an activist ethic was derived from direct contact with western ideas, or indirectly through their previous Brāhma affiliation. Nevertheless, their effort to prove that social activism was an integral part of Hindu tradition was significant because it was the basis of their theory of an indigenous form of modernization. The members of Neo-Vedānta and Neo-Vaiṣṇava movements, and several leaders of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj, believed that modernization could not and should not proceed on the same pattern as in the West. Neo-Hindu leaders in these groups advanced the notion that modernization could be achieved within the framework of indigenous Hindu thought. They based this conviction on their allegation that doctrines of individual ethical judgment, social activism and human progress were compatible with the Vaiṣṇava or Śakta-Vedānta faith. How and by what means indigenous values and institutions could be made the basis of a modern society and polity was not spelled out by the religious reformers, al-

though they tried to show that democracy was known in ancient India and was not incompatible with Hindu doctrine. They utilized forms of organization and propaganda learned from contact with the British without any apparent sense of contradiction. Although the details of their Neo-Hindu ideology of modernization were somewhat vague, their basic contention that Hindu thought and culture were compatible with progress was significant in terms of the political aspirations of the Bengali elite.

In analyzing the lives of religious reformers in late nineteenth century Bengal we have pointed to their consciousness of degradation as a conquered people as a factor in their reinterpretation of their Hindu heritage. Even the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma challenge of traditional Hindu customs which restricted their personal freedom, was also connected with their belief that the rigidity of Hindu tradition had caused the downfall and continued degradation of India. While Sādhāraṇ Brāhma religious doctrine reflected political aspirations it was not connected with a sense of political frustration. Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas active in politics in the late nineteenth century were moderates who maintained their faith that the British would gradually extend political privileges to the elite. They looked forward to a partnership in which the British and the educated elite would work together for the improvement of India. Their tendency to regard British presence as necessary for Indian

progress was consonant with their belief that ideas of individual initiative and social activism could only be derived from contact with the West.

On the other hand, the Neo-Hindu doctrine of an indigenous form of modernization expressed by Neo-Vaiṣṇava and Neo-Vedānta leaders, was a response to a growing sentiment of opposition to British rule among groups in the Bengali elite due to frustrating political conditions. While the Bengali elite was increasing in numbers and consolidating itself as a professional group with pretensions to political partnership with the British, British administrators demonstrated increased racial arrogance and distrust of the aspirations of the educated elite in India, and particularly in Bengal. As a result segments of the Bengali elite began to doubt whether the British intended to grant educated elites increased political participation and access to administrative posts. We have shown that the concern of Neo-Hindu leaders, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Bipin Pal, and Swami Vivekananda, over the British opinion that the Bengali intellectual was physically and morally weak, and their sense of degradation as part of a despised people, was an important catalyst in their reinterpretation of Hinduism. By incorporating doctrines of social activism into their Hindu heritage they hoped to encourage an activist mentality that would lead to political resurgence. They were particularly eager that educated young men, the

youthful members of the Bengali elite, should imbibe an activist spirit that would enable them to seize leadership of the country.

The activist interpretation of Hindu concepts and institutions by Neo-Hindu leaders supported their contention that Hindu culture was capable of generating progress without dependence on British influence. According to Neo-Hindu ideologies progress depended on the growth of a svadeśī spirit of self-reliance and self-development rather than on imitation of the West. In religion, education and politics, the Neo-Hindu leaders, Vivekananda, Aswini Kumar Datta, Satish Mukherji, and Pramatha Mitra, advocated "self-development," or modernization along indigenous lines. The Neo-Vaiṣṇava group and Vivekananda not only criticized the dependence of moderate politicians on the British, but also provided the Bengali elite with a new concept of their possible role as an elite independent of the British, leading the rest of Bengali society.

In discussing the relationship between Neo-Hindu religious ideology and the emergence of political militancy in Bengal one vital question is to determine the direction of influence. Do political pressures give rise to the reformulation of religious ideology or does change in religious ideology give rise to political pressures? This question of direction of influence was discussed in a recent comparative study by Donald Smith of the relationship of

various polities of the "developing" world with the religious faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Catholicism. According to Smith's Religion and Political Development, a unidirectional causal relationship cannot be established,[3] though the overall impression produced by his study is that the religious influence on politics is more significant than the reverse. The nationalist school of historians dealing with Bengal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has also stressed the influence of religion on politics. According to R. C. Majumdar's History of the Freedom Movement in India and B. B. Majumdar's Militant Nationalism in India and its Socio-Religious Background the religious reform movements were an important factor in the rise of nationalist political awareness in India.[4]

Our study of the religious reform movements has suggested that the line of influence from political toward religious change was most important. The pressure of political aspirations among the Bengali elite preceded the Neo-Hindu religious reform movements, and their reformulation of Hindu religious ideology was a justification of the

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[3]Donald Eugene Smith, Religion and Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), p. 148.

[4]R. C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. I (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962), pp. 328-329, 329-337, 357-363; B. B. Majumdar, Militant Nationalism in India and its Socio-Religious Background (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, Ltd., 1966).

political demands of this elite. The structure of Bengali religious life is somewhat vague since there is no church or well-organized hierarchy, but it is certain that religious reformulation of the late nineteenth century did not emanate from the usual sources of Bengali religious doctrine, Brāhmaṇ priests and scholars or popular Vaiṣṇava religious leaders. If these leaders had reformulated Hindu religious doctrine, it would be easier to demonstrate that an autonomous religious change led to political change. In fact, religious reformers of the late nineteenth century, with the marginal exception of Bijoy Krishna Goswami, were members of a western-educated professional elite, the group within Bengali society with the highest degree of political awareness and the weakest links to established Hindu religious activities. Neo-Hindu ideology was a response to a situation in which the political aspirations of the Bengali elite were partially blocked. This frustration stimulated sections of the elite to articulate an ideology conducive to militant opposition to British rule.

The formulation of a Neo-Hindu activist religious ideology was not in itself sufficient cause to propel the Bengali elite in the first decade of the twentieth century beyond resentment of the British administration into active participation in a militant political movement against British rule. Our study of the anti-partition agitation in Chapter Six makes it clear that the administration of Lord

Curzon which threatened the political interests of the Bengali elite was the most important cause of the anti-partition agitation. The rapid growth of political sentiments of opposition to British rule between 1899 and 1905 accounted for the spread of interest in Neo-Hindu ideology rather than the reverse. So greatly did the elite feel threatened, that even moderate Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas briefly adopted a militant political stand, but most of them did not go beyond a "constructive svadeśī" position.[5] The only group of Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas who became Extremists and advocated extended boycott and passive resistance were Bipin Pal, Aswini Kumar Datta, and Manoranjan Guha-Thakurta who had later become Neo-Vaiṣṇavas.

Although Neo-Hindu ideology was not the cause of the anti-partition agitation, it did channel the expression of political activism among the elite in this period. Neo-Hindu leaders who had articulated an indigenous theory of modernization adopted a more militant stand in the political movement than the Sādhāraṇ Brāhmas who had advocated a program of westernization. Neo-Vedānta reformulations of Hinduism provided a core of concepts from which Aurobindo and others created a militant Vedānta ideology to justify

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[5]Supporters of constructive svadeśī advocated building up the Indian economy, and a limited economic boycott, but they opposed a broader passive resistance campaign for fear of confrontation with the British.

and mobilize support for passive resistance and violent attempts to overthrow British rule. Moreover, organizations formed by Neo-Hindu leaders prior to partition were important as nuclei from which large svadeśī and terrorist revolutionary groups were organized during the anti-partition agitation. Neo-Hindu leaders were the original founders of three out of five svadeśī volunteer groups which developed terrorist activity, according to British intelligence, and were declared illegal. The fourth of these societies declared illegal was inspired by Sarala Ghoshal, a member of the Tagore family and the Ādi Brāhma Samāj, who espoused a Neo-Hindu ideology. The existence of a Neo-Hindu religious movement gave momentum to the anti-partition agitation by providing an ideological idiom of evocative symbols and organizational bases for svadeśī volunteer and terrorist societies.

Nevertheless, the primary direction of interaction between religion and politics in this period was from political toward religious change. Religious change was dependent on political change while political movements were to a greater degree autonomous. The reformulation of Hinduism was dependent on the emergence of sentiments of opposition to British rule among segments of the Bengali elite. The influence of religious change upon political developments was secondary though important; the growth of Neo-Hindu movements provided a ready-made ideological rationale and served

to reinforce political militancy among the elite in Bengal.

The final part of our thesis dealt with the attempt of the Bengali elite to utilize Neo-Hindu ideology in an actual political movement whose object was to mobilize support against British rule during the anti-partition struggle of 1905. According to our findings, Neo-Hindu ideology, which had provided the elite with ideological justification for their own opposition to British rule, did not prove to be an effective idiom for mobilizing mass political action. The second part of our hypothesis was stated as follows:

> In the first decade of the twentieth century the Neo-Hindu interpretation of the meaning of Hindu concepts and symbols was utilized by militant politicians of the Bengali elite to mobilize urban and rural upper caste support for the anti-partition movement. At the same time emphasis on _Śakta_ symbols appealing to the upper castes, and exclusion of the symbols of Islam or the _Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa_ cult of the Bengali masses in propaganda of militant political leaders, impeded the growth of a unified nationalist opposition to British rule.

When a plan for the partition of Bengal province was first revealed in 1903 by the Curzon administration, moderate political leaders of the Bengali elite convened protest meetings and drafted petitions. After partition was announced in 1905, it was denounced as a deliberate scheme of the administration to restrict the political influence of the educated elite. Younger leaders challenged moderate tactics of protest and the moderate leaders' faith in British intentions. Militant politicians supported a _svadeśī_ movement to boycott British goods and official edu-

cational institutions. Then, in 1906 the Extremist party began to press for a broader passive resistance program of total non-cooperation with the British administration, and in 1907 a terrorist movement began. The failure of the militants to gain control of the organizational apparatus of the Indian National Congress in 1907 made it difficult for them to sustain the boycott movement. The boycott declined by 1907, and the British gradually suppressed terrorism. Although the militants never actually threatened to topple British rule, they succeeded in provoking the administration to both repression and reform. The Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, granting greater Indian representation in the legislative councils, were aimed at placating the moderates and preventing the growth of political militancy.

The political position of both passive resistors and terrorists can be classified as militant because both aimed at the overthrow of British rule, and both assumed that the administration would only grant reforms under duress. Militant politicians, whether they were passive resistors like Bipin Pal or terrorists like the Jugāntar group, all utilized a Neo-Hindu political idiom which was not used by moderate politicians. The militants explained their demand for political independence in terms of the Neo-Hindu concept that modernization could be achieved within the framework of indigenous thought and culture. Their militant tactics of

confrontation with British rule were justified by the argument that British presence was an impediment to Indian progress. Aurobindo went still further and claimed that independence was required to develop the spiritual insight of *Vedānta* for the salvation of humanity. The Bengali militants were not very precise when it came to actual delineation of the organization of a future polity, but Aurobindo envisioned a new Asiatic democracy based on the *Vedāntic* insight that all are One and therefore equal.

The religious idiom utilized by the militants was labelled political *Vedānta* by Aurobindo, the chief theoretician of the movement. Political *Vedānta* ideology developed Vivekananda's Neo-*Vedānta* concept that God is the sum total of all human souls, into a more elaborate theory that God is incarnated in individuals, in humanity in general, and in national communities. The national community was seen as an incarnation of God, and specifically identified with the *Śakta* Goddess Kālī in political *Vedānta* theory. Political *Vedānta* also adopted the Hindu institution of *sannyāsa* to legitimatize political activism. The modern *sannyāsin* was urged to renounce family and personal ties to serve God as incarnated in the nation.

The philosophic foundation of the political *Vedānta* religious idiom utilized by the militants during the anti-partition agitation was Neo-*Vedānta* and the symbol of nationalism was a *Śakta* symbol. Even Bipin Pal, whose

personal faith was Vaiṣṇava, used a political Vedānta idiom with Śakta symbolism while he was active as a militant leader. The Anuśīlan Samiti which had been founded by Pramatha Mitra, a Neo-Vaiṣṇava, also heavily emphasized political Vedānta theory and Kālī symbolism. Because of the lines of religious stratification in Bengali society, the Śakta-Vedānta emphasis in the propaganda of militant leaders was especially significant. The Bengali elite shared a Śakta-Vedānta religious orientation with the Hindu upper castes in general, while the masses of the people were largely Muslim and Vaiṣṇava.

The political Vedānta of the Bengali militants is puzzling if we accept the theory that religious issues and symbols have been an important instrument in the hands of politicians who seek to mobilize the masses. Donald Smith's Religion and Political Development has indicated how political movements in transitional societies often become involved with religion. According to his explanation, the importance of religious issues and symbols is due to their capacity to politicize the masses:

> Since the turn of the century, religious symbols, issues, organizations, and leaders have played an important role in the induction of the masses into the political process. Stated in its simplest terms: in traditional societies, religion is a mass phenomenon, politics is not; in transitional societies, religion can serve as the means by which the masses become politicized.[6]

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[6] Donald Smith, op. cit., p.124.

The nationalist historical interpretation of political Vedānta and the use of Hindu symbols during the 1905 anti-partition movement in Bengal fits Donald Smith's hypothesis that religious appeals are directed toward the mobilization of the masses. According to Haridas and Uma Mukherjee religious appeals were part of a "political strategy, designed to intensify and popularise the movement."[7] Amales Tripathi classifies the use of religious appeals by both Tilak in Maharashtra and the Bengali extremists as the exploitation of "local cults to arouse mass political enthusiasm and martial ardour."[8]

Although Donald Smith's hypothesis applies to many political movements in recent Indian history, including Tilak's militant movement in Maharashtra, it does not illuminate the use of a political Vedānta idiom by the Bengali militants. The religious content of the Bengali politicians' appeal was a phenomenon quite different from the religious appeals made by Tilak for mass support in Maharashtra. Our data supports Broomfield's general conclusion that it was the failure of the Bengali elite to communicate effectively with other groups in Bengali soci-

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[7]Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, India's Fight for Freedom: or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958).

[8]Amales Tripathi, The Extremist Challenge (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1967), p. 68.

ety during the anti-partition agitation that prevented the emergence of a mass nationalist agitation.[9] The militant anti-partition agitation in Bengal was led by segments of the Bengali elite, a western-educated and urban group. The largest number of participants in the boycott, in svadeśī volunteer societies, and terrorist groups, were students and other members of the Bengali elite. The only other group within Bengali society which gave significant support to the boycott and supplied terrorist recruits were the landed, rural upper-castes. The predominantly Vaiṣṇava Bāniā castes who were small traders in the cities gave little support to the boycott movement. In the rural areas there were signs of resentment and counter-mobilization against the boycott and its upper caste supporters, among lower caste Hindus and Muslims.

The close correspondence of religious and social stratification in Bengali society made the use of religious idiom very risky. The political Vedānta idiom adopted by the militants offered some possibility of an appeal to groups outside the English-educated elite, because it presented a nationalist theory that was not obviously derived from the West. The reinterpretation of Śakta-Vedānta ideas to serve the cause of political activism turned out to have

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[9] J. H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 34.

an appeal to the predominantly *Śakta* rural upper-caste group who had little exposure to the western concept of nationalism. The emphasis on political *Vedānta* ideology, combined with secular appeals to the political and economic interests of the *zamindārs*, served to reintegrate the urban Bengali elite with the larger rural upper caste constituency in Bengali society. During the anti-partition agitation both the urban elite and the rural upper castes were more actively involved in a political cause than ever before. However, the political *Vedānta* idiom was limited because it was not meaningful to Muslims or to the Hindu lower castes who were predominantly *Vaiṣṇava*. The failure of militant leaders to utilize Muslim or *Vaiṣṇava* symbols was combined with lack of attention to the secular issues of land and tax reform, which would have appealed to the rural masses. The result of this failure was the outbreak of several serious communal riots in east Bengal.

Our study of Neo-Hinduism and the Bengali elite demonstrates that the use of religious symbols and issues in political movements in transitional societies cannot always be explained simply as an attempt by an elite to reach the masses. The social and religious stratifications of the polity in question must be carefully examined. Tilak in Maharashtra used religious symbols which appealed to both the *Brāhmaṇs* and the lower castes. Since the Muslims were a very small minority in Maharashtra, Tilak's Hindu religious

appeal did not have serious divisive consequences within his own province. The Bengali militants faced a more difficult problem. The coincidence of religious and social stratification made it difficult for them to appeal to the elite and the masses at the same time.

John Broomfield has argued that the purpose of the formulation of Neo-Hinduism idealizing the Hindu past by the elite in the late nineteenth century, was the justification of continued upper caste dominance.[10] Our findings contradict this theory because there is no evidence that the Bengali elite, whether considered as the upper caste group as a whole or as the urban professional elite, felt challenged by other social groups in the pre-partition period. The dominance of the Bengali elite in educational institutions and indigenous political associations was not challenged prior to 1905. The formulation of a Neo-Hindu ideology of an indigenous form of modernization was entirely connected with the contest of the Bengali elite with the British for political power. The post-partition period from 1912 to 1927, which Broomfield studied, was a time when the Bengali elite was being challenged by other social groups for political power. At this later time the tendency of the upper castes to cling to a political _Vedānta_ ideology with little relevance for Muslims or _Vaiṣṇavas_

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[10]Broomfield, _op_. _cit_., pp. 15-18.

may have reflected an exclusive tendency arising from a fear of competition.

The motives of leaders who used a political Vedānta idiom to appeal for support for their militant program at the time of the anti-partition agitation must still be examined. According to our data the militants were not fully aware that they were making a choice of political idiom that would mobilize certain elements of the population and alienate others. It is obvious that a Vaiṣṇava like Bipin Pal consciously chose to appeal to the rural upper castes when he used a political Vedānta idiom. The militants considered mobilization of support from the rural upper castes to be of primary political importance because the landlords had influence in rural areas which members of the urban elite lacked. Judging from the strategy outlined in the writings of Aurobindo and in the militant press, the militants planned to mobilize the landlords in the belief that they in turn would prevail upon their tenants to follow the landlords as "natural leaders." The reaction of the militant press to the complete failure of this strategy makes it clear that they had not foreseen any possibility of counter-mobilization. The Bengali elite and the upper castes in general seem to have regarded themselves as the natural and proper leaders of the Bengali masses. The pre-partition experience of the Bengali elite had given them no indication that Muslims or lower caste Hindus had any

immediate potential for political power. There were also no very clear indications that educated Muslims or British officials might be interested in exploiting the possibilities of counter-mobilization to challenge the Bengali elite.

The political Vedānta idiom provided the Bengali elite with a rationale to oppose British rule, and had the additional advantage of providing a link between the urban elite and the rural upper castes. On the other hand, this religious idiom made it difficult for the elite to communicate with other groups in Bengali society, and this difficulty in turn had important consequences for political development in twentieth century Bengal. During the anti-partition agitation a pattern of division along religious lines was established which fragmented the nationalist movement. Later in the century the political leadership of the Bengali elite was effectively challenged by Muslim politicians. The Bengali elite had created a flexible ideology with a modern outlook; at the same time Neo-Hindu ideology gave them pride in the past and justified their claim that they were capable of progressive leadership. But since political Vedānta lacked appeal for the masses, the elite could not manipulate it as a common nationalist ideology.

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